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FEATURE DETECTIVE STORY

The HOUSE behind the WALL

BY JULIAN DARROW

Don't miss "The Admiral's Spoons," by William H. Osborne. Out in our next Number.

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THE HOUSE BEHIND THE WALL

By JULIAN DARROW

CHAPTER ONE

A TRAGEDY OF PETTIGREW LANE

DETECTIVE LUTHER HOBART, while hurriedly finishing his breakfast, scrutinized a sheet of paper that he had set up against the sugar bowl, and which was covered with writing so irregular and uncertain as to indicate that the one who had held the pen must be well along in years.

He had just been talking over the phone with young Roland Bragg, son of the queer and wealthy old art collector whose name was signed there at the bottom of that communication received through the mails a couple of weeks back.

What young Bragg had to communicate was of thrilling import, even to one so accustomed to rubbing up against tragedy as the experienced detective. In a voice that plainly vibrated with emotion the other had informed him of the discovery that morning of his father lying dead in his den, struck down, so far as all appearances went, by some unknown hand, before his customary late hour for retiring had arrived.

Roland also informed the detective, who had not even known that old Praxton Bragg had a son, that of late years he had been pretty much of a world rover owing to an unfortunate quarrel with his father, in which both were to blame. He had been summoned home by the old gentleman, and the quarrel, which both of them bitterly repented engaging in, was smoothed over; so that for three months now peace had reigned in the family.

Further questioning also developed the fact that

a niece named Elsie Collins had been keeping house for Mr. Bragg; and the little catch in Roland's voice when mentioning this fact gave the astute detective cause for speculations regarding the warmth of feeling at present existing beween the two young people.

He had promised Roland to hurry over as soon as through his breakfast, and now before going amused himself studying the contents of the letter received from the rich old recluse of Pettigrew Lane, which ran as follows:

"MR. LUTHER HOBART:—Sir, Your name was given to me by a friend, Judge Jared Bosworth, who is also a collector of works of art like myself, and visits at my house. To be brief, I fear I am threatened with trouble from a madman who imagines I am responsible for some terrible wrong done his family over in Italy in the past, but which supposition is utterly without any foundation. I beg that as soon as possible you will come and see me, when I can explain the odd circumstances. Meanwhile be so good as to assure me that I shall have your advice and protection; also give me your private telephone call, so that in case of a sudden emergency I may summon you. I find that this uncertainty is wearing on my nerves. Sometimes at dead of night I wake up from a dream with a cold chill, and even fancy I can see a threatening figure couched in the shadows of my bed chamber. And just now, when my life work in the shape of a complete art catalogue encyclopedia is almost finished it distresses me beyond comprehension. Write, and promise what I ask; you can name any reasonable price for your services. Faithfully yours, "PRAXTON BRAGG."

He had been too busy to visit the old man up to now, though answering his appeal, and promising to drop in any day. For such delay he now felt keen regrets, as this dire tragedy might not have come about had he held the interview. Still he knew considerable about the eccentric collector who lived in a section of New York seldom visited by ordinary folks; indeed, not one business man in a thousand ever heard mention of such a queer little street as Pettigrew Lane. It must surely be a survival of those old days when the Stuyvesants and Van Zants had the naming of the thoroughfares and byways; when Pearl street was known as Cow Lane; and Broadway reckoned a mere country road.

Hobart had not been through that particular neighborhood in the daytime for several years, though remembering its quaintness well enough.

"And so," he mused, as he arose to get his hat, meaning to start forth, "behind that brick wall, where the last of the old Dutch houses hides itself, Praxton Bragg chose to install himself years ago, the better to indulge in his hobby of acquiring curios and antiquities. I've heard some queer stories told about the bent-over, white-haired man; some even persisted in calling him the Miser of Pettigrew Lane, I suppose because he let everything run down so, and persisted in wearing shabby clothes, though counted very rich. I only wonder he has managed to avoid being robbed during these years, though possibly he has his place protected by charged wires; or at least it is believed so, which would keep intending trespassers away. But one there seems to have been not so easily frightened, if, as his son says, he has finally come to his death through violence."

Some time later, having left the taxi he had taken to reach the neighborhood in which Praxton Bragg lived, the detective approached a high brick wall that showed all the evidences of respectable age, since green moss could be detected along the various cracks where the mortar had fallen away.

Pettigrew Lane would surely have delighted the heart of a Dickens, and the various nationalities of foreigners who lived close by must have presented a splendid picture to enchant the eye of an artist searching for the bizarre, and the unusual.

Though high factories with a multitude of windows, each disclosing a busy worker, had usurped most of the space around that region, still there were a few odd-looking houses remaining in spots, as reminders of the days of Dutch New Amsterdam.

Having opened a door in the wall, left unfastened doubtless for his accommodation by young Bragg, Hobart found himself gazing on a dreary aspect. The rows upon rows of factory windows looked down as with contempt on a patch of ground where a few miserable specimens of trees still contrived to put forth a ghastly array of pale green leaves every spring; and as regularly shed the same dress, faded and brown, on succeeding autumns; while remnants of some aged flowering shrubs clung to life here and there, a mockery of past glories. The ancient house was large and at one time must have been imposing. It had heavy shutters, with ventilation holes looking like new moons close to their tops.

Hobart used the brass knocker and quickly the door opened, after a heavy chain had rattled. A young man stood there looking eagerly at him.

"You are Mr. Hobart, I presume, sir?" said the other.

"Yes, and of course you must be Roland Bragg," remarked the detective. "Please take me to him without delay."

As they threaded their way along several halls he noted the vast accumulation of quaint objects of art, many specimens doubtless worth considerable money. Then young Bragg stopped and unlocked a door with a key he took from his pocket.

"This is father's den, as he himself always called it, sir," he said.

First Hobart noted that the gas was lighted, though it was now nine o'clock in the morning. Both passed in and Roland closed the door. Already Hobart had discovered the gastly object

lying on the floor. The white-haired curio collector lay crumpled up, just as he had fallen when some frightful blow had struck his unprotected head. Upon laying a hand on his blood-stained face Hobart found it as cold as ice.

The detective looked around, curious to discover the nature of the weapon used to bring about the tragedy. Almost immediately he stooped and picked up something from the door. He stared at it wonderingly, for it was indeed an uncouth object, being apparently a heavy metal squatting frog, and of a bright red color. The presence of several white hairs glued to the back of the relic of antiquity told that it had been used to accomplish the foul deed.

"What do you know about this, Roland?" queried the detective.

"Very little, sir," came the steady reply. "It always gave me a strange feeling of repulsion, it looked so horrible. I asked father where he got it, and he said he had bought it from some explorer, who unearthed it from one of the old tombs along the Nile. I think he prized it because he believed it to be thousands of years old."

"Perhaps mere accident caused the assassin to snatch up this object and use it, when an even better weapon lay so handy," and Hobart pointed to what looked like a brass cylinder with a knob at one end, that lay on the floor—apparently a two-foot section of old gas chandelier pipe.

Young Bragg stooped and picked this up to look at it meditatively.

"Possibly you recollect seeing that brass cylinder in here before, Roland?" Hobart went on to say; but the other shook his head in the negative as he replied:

"I do not, sir, though you must remember that I have only recently returned home. Could it be possible the assassin fetched this here intending to make use of it in a spirit of revenge, and then changed his mind? But perhaps we could find out whether it belonged in father's den, Mr. Hobart!"

"Ah! yes, you are thinking now of your cousin, Elsie Collins I believe her name is, who has lived with your father since she was a child. Surely she ought to be able to set us right on this small but significant point."

"I only hope something can be done to soothe the dear girl, sir, for she has been acting strangely since she discovered what happened in the night."

"Any servants, Roland?" pursued the detective.

"An old woman named Maggie Toole, who does the cooking. There is an aged fellow named Jeffries, who pretends to look after the rough work around; but he's rheumatic, and only kept because father was attached to him. Both sleep on the premises, sir, and retired at their usual hour. As for me, I sat up until midnight."

"Would you mind telling me what relationship save that of cousin exists between Elsie and yourself, Roland?" continued the detective, smiling.

"Sir, we were sweethearts from childhood, and through the years I rove the wide world I never met a girl who lured me from my boyhood love. So, after I had that letter in Singapore from father, begging me to come home and see him again before it was too late, I lost no time in obeying, for memories of Elsie drew me on. Since my return we have become really engaged."

That sounded very manly, and Hobart went deeper into the matter.

"You said you and your father had quarreled, I believe, Roland?"

"Yes, I am ashamed to admit it, for I should have remembered even then he was growing old—and peculiar. I went away telling him I should never look to him for another penny. When I came home I had quite a snug little pile laid aside, having engaged in trading around the Malay Coast. In fact I feel that I have quite enough to take Elsie and myself to the Far East, where, with my fine trading boat, I confidently believe that fortune awaits us," and then he sighed as if some discordant note had struck in to mar the pleasant prospect he had been apparently mapping out.

"Who made the terrible discovery here first?" Hobart demanded, suddenly.

"I did, sir," came the steady reply. "The door was locked, and I could see a light under it, showing that the gas still burned. Old Jeffries joined me after I had knocked several times. Getting no answer, we put our shoulders to the door, and managed to push it open, though I replaced the screws afterwards. Elsie, hearing all the row, had come up, and was looking on, white of face. She shrieked and carried on as if in hysterics. Old Jeffries and Maggie managed between them to get her to her room, for strange to say, sir, she would not let me even touch her!"

Hobart started, and looked keenly at the agitated speaker.

"Why should Elsie act that way, do you think, Roland?" he asked. "If you are lovers she should naturally fly to your arms in her great grief."

The young man seemed to swallow as though almost choking.

"Mr. Hobart," he went on, "terrible as it may seem for me to say it, I fear my dear girl has become temporarily deranged; she even suspects that I, who would have risked my life many times over to defend my father, have had something to do with his tragic taking off! That, sir, is the cause of the anguish from which I am suffering at this moment—of resting under her condemnation and unjust suspicion!"

"Perhaps the shock has temporarily unsettled her reason," said Hobart, in a voice meant to be reassuring; "when the mind is thrown the least bit off its balance the person so afflicted is very apt to turn against their dearest friend. We'll speak of that again later on. Just now I wish to look around."

He went into the room adjoining and stayed there some little time. Once Roland heard a plain squeak, as if some door seldom used had been opened; which he knew must be one connecting with the hall. Then Hobart came back.

To the astonishment of the young man he bent over the motionless figure of the dead man, removed both felt slippers, and seemed to be feeling of each foot in turn; after which he replaced the slippers and arose, still looking as mysterious as the Sphinx itself.

CHAPTER TWO

IN SEARCH OF A CLUE

"LISTEN, Roland," the detective said, impressively, after once more rising, "I noticed a key in the lock of this connecting door between the two rooms, so I shall take the liberty of fastening it, and keeping the key. Truth to tell there is a clue of some importance in there which I would not care to have disturbed by either Maggie or Jeffries. Now about the old man who suffers from rheumatism—is he badly afflicted?"

"At times he has trouble in hobbling around, sir," came the ready answer.

Hobart shook his head as though that settled one point at least.

"Tell me," he continued, "has he any deformity of the feet—do you happen to know whether Jeffries has ever lost one of his toes?"

"Why, no, sir, as far as I can say," came the slow answer from the puzzled Roland.

"In his letter to me," continued the detective, "your father mentioned the fact that he feared his life was in danger. It was his intention, I believe, to tell me all about it when I called. Do you know to what he referred, Roland?"

"I do not, Mr. Hobart," came the quick answer. "I suspected that father was worrying over something, but he did not see fit to confide in me."

"Your father mentioned a long-standing account—of a party erroneously believing he had done them an injury in the past. Now, placed aside in his desk in the other room I found a letter which I fancy he meant to show me; here it is."

With that he took a paper out of an inner pocket and handed it to the other. What young Roland Bragg read with amazement in his face was of a type to indicate that the writer, while a foreigner, could be no uneducated person:

MR. PRAXTON BRAGG:—Sir, this is the third time I have sent you a warning; it will be the last. Many years have passed since you committed the wrong that so cruelly robbed my honored family in Italy of their most treasured possession. I have searched the whole world over to find the wretch who stole our matchless Madonna and Child, worth a king's ransom, and long the glory of the Benedotta family. All I knew was that he himself was an art collector, though under it a base thief! So at last in the New World I have discovered that it was *you!* Perhaps even now the immortal painting which carried all the good luck of the Benedottas hangs there in your home, to greet you each morning as you rise; to be the last to smile down upon you when you retire; and, sir, it is a thought that is burning all day long in my brain.

"I cannot longer allow you to remain in undisputed possession of such a treasure—you who long, long ago stole it from my people across the sea. Unless you agree to surrender it to the last living representative of the noble Benedottas I shall be tempted to pay you a visit, sir, when you least expect it; and the vendetta can have no sharper poniard than mine.

"Here then are my terms of surrender. You shall hang a red rag from an upper window of your house, which I watch every day, and all day long as I work at my bench. That will tell me you surrender unconditionally; and that perhaps you may even remunerate me for all these years of searching and roaming. Sir, day after day I mean to watch for the red rag. See to it then that my patience is not exhausted. There is Sicilian blood in my veins; and we Benedottas strike hard when we see the need. This is the last warning you may receive; if you value your life take warning. I am known by another name, but back of it all I am still

"ANTHONY BENEDOTTA."

Roland finished this strange, wild screed. His first act was to turn his eyes upon the motionless form of his father lying there on the floor. Was that the conclusion of the dire threat; and had the ugly red frog been used from some sudden impulse, instead of the customary Italian stiletto?

"What do you make it out?" asked the smooth voice of Mr. Hobart.

"Oh! it is some strange mistake in identity, or else this man is crazy," came the immediate reply. "Why, he speaks of a Madonna worth a fortune; but I am sure my father never possessed any such object. His collection did not touch on pictures in the least; he always said he had no judgment whatever in that line, when a mere daub could deceive him."

"I incline myself toward the belief that the writer of this must be one who hugs a delusion to his heart. He has even come to believe in it himself; and learning that this house sheltered an art collector, the rest has been easily imagined. Turn the paper over, and see what your father wrote there."

Upon doing so Roland found in the well-known writing of Praxton Bragg:

"This man must be a lunatic to accuse me of such a vile thing. I swear that I never possessed a picture of the Madonna; nor ever heard of the Benedotta family before his first warning letter

came, which, with the second, I burned. Of course I have been in Italy several times, but this is simply ridiculous. He has either hit upon the wrong party, or else is subject to hallucinations. I shall, of course, pay no attention to his demand that I show a red flag from my window; but if anything happens to me I request that this man be looked up, and punished if proven guilty."

"It is just as I expected, sir," said Roland; "my father would be incapable of doing such a wrong. No wonder he tore up those other letters of warning."

"Still," continued the detective, "it worried Praxton Bragg. I can easily imagine him walking there in the old garden, and looking up uneasily from time to time at those numberless factory windows, perhaps fancying a pair of vengeful black eyes following his every movement. In his letter to me he spoke about it, even mentioning how he would wake up nights to imagine a dim figure crouching in a corner of his room, awaiting a chance to strike him. That would be this swarthy Italian, I presume, Roland. But I am done here for the present. We can leave everything as we found it. Lock the door after you, and give me the key."

A minute afterwards and they stood in the hall.

"I wonder if I could see your cousin, Elsie?" remarked the detective.

"Certainly sir, if you wish it," the young man assured him; "but you could not soothe her, I am sure, unless you were able to convince her that it is all a mistake to dream I had a hand in this terrible tragedy. That seems to be the paramount cause of her anguish, and she will not listen to me nor even allow me to come near her."

"Can you guess just why she should conceive this strange suspicion.

"Why, of course, sir, Elsie knew that my father and I had quarreled long ago. She may suspect the old embers of that fire still smolder in my blood; and something occurred last night to revive them; so that in a sudden passion I struck blindly! Oh! the bitterness of knowing she could believe me capable of lifting a hand against my own father."

"Yes, but is there not still something more on which to rest such a suspicion?" asked Mr. Hobart, bluntly, feeling sure of his ground.

Without the least hesitation the other replied to this question.

"I think I know what has given rise to that dreadful thought in the poor girl's mind, sir," he went on, candidly enough. "It chanced that long after we had said goodnight, and I had retired, I remembered that side door which I had promised poor old Jeffries I would see was fastened, and which I had utterly forgotten. So I got out of bed, threw on my bath-robe, and went downstairs; for we always keep a light turned low in the upper hall. To my surprise I found the bar in place across the door, someone having attended to it. And, Mr. Hobart, I think I heard Elsie's door move after I passed; so it is barely possible she looked out and saw me going downstairs!"

"Ah! yes, and the poor child, overcome with horror at seeing your father lying here weltering in his blood, leaped to the conclusion that you and he might have renewed the long-settled quarrel, with dreadful consequences."

"A woman can be unreasonable, Mr. Hobart, when shocked as she must have been. I don't doubt but that Elsie will later on deeply regret allowing even a suspicion of my honor and affection to enter her dear head; but just now, sir, she is hardly responsible for what she is wailing; and I have concluded to leave her as much as possible to herself until she becomes more reasonable."

"I commend your motive, son," said the detective, nodding his head as he spoke; "and now suppose you lead me to that side door while we are on this ground floor; I would like to take a look at it."

"Here it is, Mr. Hobart, and yonder stands the wooden bar. Jeffries must have unfastened it earlier this morning."

"I would like to make absolutely certain on that point; if yonder old chap happens to be Jeffries call him over, and tell him who I am."

He quickly saw that Jeffries was apparently both honest and faithful. He limped painfully as one so afflicted might be expected to do; but his seamed face was candor itself, though just then filled with such awe as the coming of a tragedy might be expected to bring in its train.

"Yes, sor," he said in answer to Hobart's question; "I'll be glad to tell all I know, but 'tis precious little at that, sor."

"Have you been out in the garden this morning, Jeffries?" demanded Hobart.

"No, sor, I have not," the old man assured him, positively.

"Oh!" continued the detective, "then I suppose it was merely as a customary part of your daily duties that caused you to remove this heavy bar, and leave the door so it could be opened by the latch alone?"

Jeffries shook his head doggedly, as he replied to this direct question:

"I give ye my word, sor, I did not touch the bar this blessed mornin' at all; though it should have been me juty to do that same; but it's like walkin' in a dream I am, sor."

"That's strange," commented Hobart, flashing a meaning look toward the younger man; "you are certain the bar was in place after midnight, are you, Roland?"

"I would take my oath it was, when I left my bed, and came down to see, sir."

"I wonder now could Maggie have unfastened it this morning," pursued Hobart.

"I have been in this house, sor, since the day Maggie came, well on sixteen years back, solemnly affirmed Jeffries, "an' to the best of me belief

that woman never once has gone in or out of this door, or even laid a finger on the same. There's another door in her kitchen she prefers, so she does, sor."

"Apparently then, Roland, some one must have gone out by that side door *after* you came down to take a look at it, long past midnight. Possibly he may have been concealed in the house, and it was his hand that put the bar in place so mysteriously. If this theory proves correct, that at present unknown party may be guilty of this dreadful crime. I wonder now whether one of those busy factories adjoining your property could be a brass-finishing establishment, where gas and lamp fixtures are manufactured, or lacquered; although this discolored section appears to be one long used. I may look that point up later. Jeffries, you appear to be in pain; please sit down on this ancient hall chair; I want to ask you a few plain questions while about it."

The old man did as requested, and looked expectant.

"Where is your room located, Jeffries?" demanded the detective.

"At the back of the house, sor, on the second floor. All the rooms that we use are there; but aloft there be two more. There's no heat there in the winter time, and they do be turrible hot summers, so we leave thim empty."

"You are a good sleeper, I take it, Jeffries?"

"Ginerally I am, sor, whin the pain it do leave me," came the answer.

"How about last night; were you awake much after retiring?"

"Just what I was, sor; this rheumatiz it be a bad thing; and it seemed to me I got but catnaps all night long."

Jeffries, pay strict attention to me now—while lying there did you happen to hear any strange sounds overhead—up in the garret, I mean?"

The old man shrugged his shoulders, made a grimace, and winked knowingly.

"Manny the time, sor, sure I have. 'Tis a great place, that attic, for the fairies, and the witches, to have their dance at night in the light of the moon. I've often laid awake and smiled to picture the ould hags with their broomsticks an' tall hats a-sailin' in through one of thim broken windys."

"Of course, being Irish, Jeffries, you are a firm believer in the visitation of the banshee at the time of a death?" persisted Hobart; while the puzzled Roland listened intently, trying to figure what the other was at.

The old man moistened his dry lips, and shivered before replying.

"Sure I've heard the banshee moan and cry across in the ould country more'n once, sor; an' by the powers it never failed to announce a death in the family."

Hobart made no attempt to impugn such childlike faith in the supernatural; indeed, it was more to his purpose just then to encourage it, if anything.

"Did you hear the banshee last night, Jeffries?" he queried, encouragingly.

"Arrah! how could I, sor, with all the noise goin' on?" replied the crippled servant, reproachfully. "I am sure it called, but the sound of its wailin' must a-been swallowed up in the roar of the elevated trains. But I do assure you, sor, the witches and fairies was a-holdin' high carnival up aloft—of that I do be positive."

"Why do you say that, Jeffries?"

"Between times, sor, when the outside noises died away, couldn't I hear the same dancin' like mad? And onct, sor, didn't there come a loud *bang*, just for all the worrld like some clumsy elf had tripped over the old furniture we do be havin' stored up there, an' fallen flat. I sat me up straight in me bed when I heard that; if I'd dared I'd a-gone up to see the fun, so I would."

Hobart realized that he had extracted about all the information possible from the old man, and with a last word he led Roland along the hall.

CHAPTER THREE

A FRESH OUTBREAK

"DO you really imagine he heard anything up there?" asked the young man.

"Hard to say," chuckled Hobart. "He spoke of a loud noise, as of someone falling, or knocking some object over. If you will lead me to the attic door I think I'd like to take a turn up in the enchanted regions. Somehow or other a garret, with all its accumulated rubbish, and castoffs in the way of broken or discarded furniture, has always appealed to me since the time when as a boy I used to sneak away to some such place so as to read my forbidden thrilling tales of wild Indian life, and delightful pirate yarns. Perhaps I may be able to put on Jeffries' magical glasses, and even discover in the dust of the garret some plain and unmistakable signs of fairies' mad gallop."

"I'll wait for you down here, sir," suggested Roland, after they had ascended to the second story, and reached the box-like, closed-in attic stairs.

It was some time before the detective joined him. When he did come he seemed to be backing down the narrow stairs; and as he struck a match just then Roland could see that he appeared to be examining each step closely.

"Apparently some of Jeffries' fairies did leave traces behind, sir," he remarked when the other reached the landing and the door was again closed.

Hobart gave him a whimsical look.

"An Irishman's goblins and fairies are singular creations, Roland, I've often discovered," he went on to say, dryly. "They are even apt to take on flesh-and-blood properties on occasion. I'll not say anything more than that I admit to having

been amply repaid for my visit to your attic. Is that Elsie moaning I seem to hear?"

"I'm sorry to say it is, sir. She doesn't seem able to get over it at all. If you listen you can even make out some of her repeated words; again and again she keeps on saying, reproachfully: 'Oh! why did you do it; how could you dream of such a terrible thing; I wish I had died before knowing this!' "

"At least you can never doubt her intense love for you, Roland."

"That is true, sir; but it is pitiful, and I only hope and pray you may quickly solve this terrible mystery, for her peace of mind, as well as mine."

"Have a little patience, my boy, and I believe I shall be able to point to the wretch responsible for this mad act. I am about to leave you for a short time, as I wish to look around the neighborhood a bit. I shall return shortly; and meanwhile do not dream of calling up Police Headquarters; time enough for that when I give the word."

When Hobart went out of the house of death he did not immediately make for the door in the ancient brick wall, but passed around to one side of the house. Here he busied himself, wandering back and forth, even going to the rear wall, and examining it carefully. Several times he might have been observed to lean over, and poke at the earth with a short stick he had picked up.

Then again he would glance upward at those rows on rows of open factory windows, through which could be seen busy workers at bench or lathe. Doubtless many a pair of curious eyes glanced down in his direction. Anything that might be discovered in that old over-run Dutch garden connected with the ancient house was bound to attract attention, for the reason that outside of wandering cats it was most unusual to see any sign of life there.

Perhaps, too, Hobart was speculating as he stood there, whether a certain pair of snappy vengeance-filled eyes might be glued upon him, with the swarthy face of Anthony Benedotta wreathed in sardonic satisfaction.

Finally, as though having satisfied his curiosity in a fashion, the detective passed to the exit. He soon found himself outside the enclosing wall, and moving along the narrow thoroughfare that in all the vicissitudes of modern life still clung to that quaint name of Pettigrew Lane.

He disappeared in the rear of the Bragg property, where various bustling hives in the shape of tenements lay, each filled to the limit with foreign families. It was twenty minutes afterwards that on approaching the door in the wall again he noticed a man loitering in the shadow not far from the entrance.

The fellow smoked a black pipe, and seemed to be waiting for someone. He was a foreigner, and Hobart set him down as an Italian from the colony back of Praxton Bragg's place. His sparkling black eyes, and bristling mustache gave him rather a repulsive appearance. As Hobart passed the fellow gave him a careless nod, and received an indifferent one in return.

Hobart did not think it good policy to stop and inquire whether his name chanced to be Anthony Benedotta; such an exhibition of curiosity would only serve to put the man on his guard. He did notice, however, that the fellow watched him pass in through that little door in the wall, as though deeply interested in his movements.

When the detective joined Roland, who let him in at the front door, he immediately saw that the other looked still further worried.

"What has happened since I went out, Roland?" asked the detective.

"More complications have arisen, sir, strange to say," replied the other. "This time it is old Maggie, who started to carrying on something awful after you left, sir."

"You surprise me," said the detective. "Has the shock broken the poor old woman all up, even as it appears to have done with Elsie?"

"Worse than that, sir; she keeps moaning, and calling herself an ingrate, and saying that only for her my poor father might be alive at this minute. To quiet her I explained that you were a detective I had called in, and that you would soon discover the culprit."

"And what effect did that have, Roland?"

"Just the opposite from what I had anticipated, sir. She started wringing her hands, and burst into a torrent of maudlin tears. I began to wonder whether after all there might not be something back of her self-accusation, sir."

"I will see Maggie right away, and learn what it all means," said Mr. Hobart, decisively. "What did she tell you, first of all?"

"Mostly that she slept like a rock last night, not hearing a single sound; which makes her moanings and despairing exclamations seem more mysterious."

"Her alarm clock went off at six-thirty this morning, when she says she arose, dressed, went down to the kitchen, commenced her daily chores, and was ready to serve breakfast at the time we made our dreadful discovery. It still remains on the stove, going to waste, because neither Elsie nor myself can touch a single bite, as it would choke us."

"One thing sure," said Hobert," Maggie believes she knows *something* that is apt to shed light on this deep mystery. Leave it to me, Roland. Now please fetch the cook here, so I can question her."

"Just as you say, sir," and with the words the young man hastened off.

Shortly afterwards Hobart could hear them coming, Roland begging her to be calm so she might talk with the gentleman coherently; while her groaning was very pronounced, intermingled with various types of hysterical sobs.

She proved to be a corpulent old body, with a real florid and good-natured Irish face. Her hair was sadly disarranged, while her cheeks were very moist from the flow of tears.

"This is the gentleman, Maggie," said Roland,

leading her up to Hobart. "He will listen to what you have to say, as well as give you good advice. Now tell him all you know, Maggie; for the truth has *got* to come out sooner or later, remember!"

A little to the surprise of Hobart she promptly slid down on her knees before him, and commenced waving her clasped hands wildly to and fro, as at the same time she started a choking utterance, the words chasing one another in confusion. He listened closely, hoping to discover a vein of rich ore amidst the slag, that might at least serve as a foundation for some fresh theory, if nothing better.

"Oh, wirra! the kindest master Oi iver had, and me the base ingrate, so I was, to repay all his ginerosity in such a sinful way?" she gurgled, accompanying the words with sundry groans, rocking her fat body back and forth the while. "Sure Oi filt it in me bones, so Oi did, that evil was comin' to this house, whin Oi looked out o' me windy that turrible night, an' seen the Ould Nick hisself a-cavortin' around our yard! Didn't Oi know thin there was somethin' turrible abroodin'; but bad cess to the luck that the cowld hand o' death should come to me dear master, and by the same token through *me!* Wirra! wirra! I do be wishin' mesilf in the cowld grave, so Oi do!"

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LOYAL HEART OF MAGGIE

"LISTEN to me, Maggie," said the detective, fixing his masterful eye on the weeping, hysterical cook; "I am not here to do you the slightest injury; on the contrary I am your best friend. Do you understand that, my good woman?"

"Yis, sir, I belave ye do be speakin' the truth," she mumbled.

"You may be of considerable assistance to me, Maggie," he continued; "but to render a last service to the kind master who will never speak to you again you must brace up, and try to contain yourself. No harm can possibly come to you, Maggie, rest assured of that."

She sighed heavily, and shook her poor old head dolefully.

"Sure an' Oi'll try me bist, sir; but me heart it do fale like a lump of lid in me bosom, whiniver I think o——"

"Forget all that for the time being, Maggie," he commanded. "Now, you made a queer statement a minute ago that I'd like you to explain further. It concerns what you *thought* you saw in the garden one night!"

No sooner had the detective said this than like a flash, and possibly involuntarily, the good old creature made the sign of the cross before her.

"Oh! 'twas him, Oi'm tillin' ye, sir; Oi do be sure of the same!" she gasped, in frightened accents. "Didn't me startin' eyes say his forked tail, an' thim cloven hoofs as plain as daylight? Oi got the shock of me loife, so Oi did, sir. Wirra! didn't Oi try to make mesilf belave me supper disagreed wid me, and that 'twas on'y a bad drame; but I knowed better, sir. 'Twas a plain warnin' of evil days acomin', that's what it was, just like the banshee had crooned over this unlucky house."

"How long ago since you saw this spectre in the garden, Maggie?" Hobart asked.

"I'm tryin' to remimber, sir," she whined; "never wull Oi forget how the baste looked perched up on the back wall, with that lightnin' playin' on him."

"Oh! then it was a night of storm, was it, Maggie?" he demanded, instantly.

"To be sure it was, sir; else why would Oi be a-sayin' that about lightnin'? Yis, there was thunder, too, a heap of it, but niver a drap of rain all night."

"That sounds good to me, Maggie," he told her, encouragingly; "because I recollect that night very well. As you say lightning flashed at intervals, and the thunder boomed every little while. It was just a week ago last Tuesday, Maggie."

"True for ye, sir!" she exclaimed; "because Oi'd washed the day before, Oi remimber, and some of the clothes they hung there in the yard. Whin Oi heard all that wind Oi got out of me bid, and wint to the windy to say if things they were blowin' away; and thin, to me iverlastin' horror, sir, Oi did be settin' eyes on that dridful object makin' signs up at me, the ugly baste!"

"Listen, Maggie," he interrupted; "you said before this object was cavorting around the garden; and now it was on the top of the rear wall you noticed it."

"But indade, I seen it twict, sir," she instantly protested.

"Ah! that would explain it then," said Hobart. "Evidently this demon has a decided fancy for visiting your back yard. It must offer special attractions to draw him over so often. By the way, when was it you saw him again, Maggie?"

"I'm tryin' to think, sir, an' I belave it was the third night after the storm."

"And what did you do about it?" continued the detective.

"Towld Father McGrath the very nixt time I wint to confession, an' the good man, seein' how it was worritin' me, did shut his eyes whin I took me bottle and scooped up a bit of howly water, which the nixt day I sprinkled along the wall to do away with the smell of brimstone and sulphur. It aised me mind considerable, so it did, sir. An' ivery night since then I belave that same ould divvle kapes atryin' to climb over the wall, only to fraze his fingers, bad cess to him, say Oi!"

"Now," said Hobart, "I'm going to change the subject, and ask why you take yourself so bitterly to task on account of the sudden death of your kind master; my good woman, what could *you* possibly have had to do with that?"

"Och! that I should forget me base conduct in givin' shelter to such an ingrate, sir; but they do say blood is thicker than water, an' Jimmy, poor bye, is me nephew, sir, bein' he's me sister's only child; and since she's gone to glory somehow Oi'd set me heart on tryin' to bring him up to be a credit to the Maloney family. And now it's black disgrace the lad has dragged us all into, so it be!"

"What has Jimmy done, do you fear, Maggie?" asked Hobart, in thrilling tones.

"The saints presarve me for sayin' it, sir; becase Oi wouldn't wrong the poor lad for the worrld; but Oi fear Jimmy done it!"

Roland leaned closer, pale and anxious at this sudden turn in the case.

"Do you mean," demanded Hobart, sternly, "that this nephew of yours, who it seems has gone to the bad, despite all your efforts toward his uplift, actually struck the blow that took your employer's life—is that what you imply by your words, Maggie?"

She nodded her aged head, and gulped as though almost choking.

"Then," continued the detective mercilessly, "Jimmy was in this house, to your certain knowledge, last night?"

"Yis, sir, that do be the truth," she whimpered, still waving both hands.

"To see you, of course, Maggie?"

"Till beg of me to lit him have more money," she admitted, shamefacedly. "Oi'd already give the lad half me last month's wages, and he wanted the rist. Oi do be afraid Oi've been spilin' Jimmy wid me liberality. He tormented me nigh to death, but I tried to be as firm as the rocks, sir. Ye say, it wasn't that I objected to lettin' him have the money at all; but Oi'd heard from Father McGrath how me Jimmy was aplayin' the ponies, an' agoin' wid a bad bunch; so I towld him niver a cint more would I give him till he'd cut out that lot, bad cess to 'em, an' reformed, that's what I said, sir."

"Well, this is all very interesting, my good woman," observed Hobart, "but let's get down to brass tacks. Jimmy stayed in the house last night, did he? You evidently had some place down by the kitchen where you could tuck him away, and then give him his breakfast in the morning—perhaps not for the first time either?"

"Ye do be a great guesser, sir, for that was just what Oi did," the big-hearted old Irish woman said, half defiantly. "Once Oi asked the master if he had any objections to me Jimmy staying over-night, and he towld me niver a bit; so ye say, sir, I had me authority for doin' what I did."

"And what did Jimmy have to say for himself this morning, Maggie?"

"Arrah now, didn't Oi till ye the lad slipped away before Oi got up, and him not aven waitin' as usual to have a cup of hot coffee, and a roll?"

"What did you think about such unusual actions, Maggie?" Hobart pressed.

"Sure, sir, I towld mesilf the bye was sorry for bein' so persistent like, an' that it might be he had determined to turn over a new leaf. Oi remimber Oi was sayin' to mesilf that may be he'd go an' ask the advice of the good father, an' get started on the straight road. Thin, later on, it struck me like a blow in the face, how my Jimmy was in this house last night whin a dreadful crime was committed; and slipped away like a thafe in the dark, so he did, poor little ingrate that he is!"

"Yes," Hobart went on, to encourage her, "and doubtless in your mind, Maggie, you figured how the boy, being rendered reckless and desperate by your refusal to give him more money, had gotten up after you retired for the night, and was prowling around downstairs, bent on stealing anything of value that he could pawn for cash, when perhaps he was discovered by Mr. Bragg; and in the moment of excitement, faced by exposure and possible arrest, he struck with the first object that came to his hand—which happened to be the heavy metal red frog! Didn't something like that pass through your mind, woman?"

"Yis," she whispered, almost choked with emotion, "that do be the awful thing that clutched me poor achin' heart; and me a-prayin' that Oi might be the manes of savin' that orphan lad. But if it turns out that my Jimmy did this turrible crime, thin, sir, I hope the law will take its due course, for Oi'd disown him, so Oi would!"

Hobart stepped back, seeing that Roland wished to speak with him.

"There's one thing Jimmy's flitting would explain, sir," whispered the young man; "which is the fact of that side door being barred when I came down to see, along about two o'clock."

"Yes, Jimmy could have passed out that way," said the detective, reflectively; "and then again another might have made use of the same means of egress."

"I wouldn't put it past the cub to do such a thing, if hard pressed, sir."

"From that remark I imagine you have met Jimmy?" suggested Hobart.

"Yes, once by accident, and wasn't impressed favorable, I must admit. He seemed a hulk of a shiftless Irish lad, willing to loaf, I judged, and prey on his indulgent aunt. But if he did it in order to steal, how does it come that not a single thing we know about was taken, Mr. Hobart?"

"Easily accounted for," came the ready reply. "He may have been frightened at what his aroused passion had led him into doing, and only thought of making a quick get-away."

"Are you through with Maggie, sir, because the poor creature is quivering with an excess of emotion, and should be allowed to return to her kitchen so as to quiet down. I certainly hope father has left her some remembrance in his will, for she has always been a faithful servant; it's too bad she is cursed with such an ungrateful viper of a nephew."

Maggie meanwhile had kept sobbing as though her heart was broken. She stabbed at her

streaming eyes with an end of a dingy gingham apron. Now and then she would shake her head dolefully, and stare out of the tail of her eye toward the window near at hand, through which it was possible to obtain a fair view of the wall separating the grounds from Pettigrew Lane.

Hobart, glancing that way, saw that it was easy to mark the spot where the door in the wall was located. He rather fancied Maggie was indulging in the mournful reflection that her tenure of office was likely to come to a sudden end through this terrible crime committed by one of her own flesh and blood—perhaps the poor creature even imagined she could see herself being escorted through that same exit in charge of an officer of the law, prison bound.

Then all at once Roland uttered a cry; and Hobart saw him staring out.

"Look what's coming in here, Mr. Hobart!" exclaimed the young man.

At that both the detective and Maggie hastened to do as the other had asked. Two parties had just come in by way of the opening in the wall. One was a strapping big policeman, who stopped only long enough to turn a key in the lock, possibly to keep a jostling, curious crowd from trooping after him; and from his familiarity with the premises it was plain to be seen that he was not in the grounds of the Bragg place for the first time.

With one hand he maintained a firm grip on the shoulders of a well-grown, husky-looking boy, shabbily clothed, and now squirming in that clutch of the law. Maggie stared, and then gave vent to a feeble squawk.

"Och! wirra! the saints presarve us, it's me friend, Mister Brannigan, the illegant cop; and he do be havin' poor Jimmy bye in his turrible grip. Didn't Oi know evil was bound to come to this house after me a-savin' that ould divvle sittin' on the wall, an' grinnin' up at me? They ketched me poor bye, and it's bringin' him back Mike is doin', so he can be confronted by the ivedence of his duplicity an' depravity! Woe is me that Oi've lived to say this day! Oh! why did Oi refuse to let him have that money; sure I'd give it till Jimmy, ivery cint of it, this minute, an' welcome! I'd coin me blood, that Oi would, for love of Jimmy; but it's all over, and he'll get the chair!"

"Go to the door, Roland," said the detective, quickly, "and let them in. I know Officer Brannigan, and you can depend on his fidelity and prudence. We will soon understand the meaning of this fresh episode, at least. I'll wait here with Maggie."

CHAPTER FIVE

THE TELL-TALE FOOTPRINTS

PRESENTLY Officer Brannigan, looking very severe, entered the room, maintaining a firm grip on the crestfallen Jimmy. Hobart, however, eyed the lad without discovering that abject terror such as might be expected had he been guilty of such a ghastly crime, and was now about to be confronted with the fruit of his murderous passion.

"Hello! Officer Brannigan!" was his cheery greeting.

"Good marnin' to ye, Mr. Hobart," came from the policeman. "'Tis little I expected to see ye here the day, sir."

"What are you fetching the kid in for, Brannigan?" continued the detective.

"To confound the little rascal, by the same token," said the big officer, casting a proud look toward the agitated Maggie, and giving his prisoner a shake as he spoke. "I nabbed him when there was a cry raised of pickpockets, and several o' his slippery pals skipped out. And when I frisked him, say, it nearly took me breath away so it did, when I found stuck deep in his pocket this lady's illegant purse, with just sixteen dollars and thirty cints in the same; and a card showin' that it belonged to me good frind Maggie, livin' in this Bragg house!"

There was a low cry as from a sorely wounded heart. Maggie, still down on her knees, was staring at the object the big policeman held out. Hobart smiled as though pleased at the way things were going.

"Yis, 'tis me purse all right, all right, Mike!" Maggie involuntarily gasped.

"What made me mad clane through," continued the officer, turning to Hobart, "was to have the impudent little cub say agin and agin that Maggie here was his own aunt; and that she gives him this illegant purse wid all the money. As I was on me way to the station wid the baste, an' had to pass clost by, I made up me mind to stip in an' have Maggie say she didn't know the thafe from Adam; as well as idintify her property, which the same she has done, sir."

Jimmy was cowering there like a whipped cur. He evidently expected that his aunt, whose hospitality he had so grossly abused, would forthwith angrily denounce him as a base ingrate, and proceed to wash her hands of him once and for all. Ah! but then Jimmy was a poor reader of character, or he would never have believed such a thing of Maggie. Hobart knew better, and therefore he was not much surprised when he saw her struggle to her feet to angrily confront the pair of newcomers.

"Gimme the purse, Mike Brannigan," she said, slowly, though it was at Jimmy she was looking, and with a light in her Irish blue eyes that to the detective was illuminating—a light that revealed all the tenderness of her great heart.

No sooner had she clutched the purse than she impulsively thrust it out again.

"Take it again, Jimmy, bye!" she commanded. "Faith, 'tis yours, and I defy any dense-witted cop to say the same doesn't belong to yees. Sure a hard workin' woman do have a right to give her favorite nephew *some* of her earnin's, if she plases, an' whose business is it, I want to know?

Oi'm surprised at yer ignorance, Mike Brannigan! Couldn't ye say the family resimblance in me bye's face? Sure he wouldn't till ye a lie, would ye, Jimmy darlint? The money is his to do with what he likes, do ye understand, Mike? And me mind is so aisy with the great load that's dropped from me shoulders Oi'm only sorry it isn't three times the amount, if it'd starrt ye up in business like ye said, Jimmy lad!"

Abashed by the denunciation of his friend the officer released his grip.

"I hope ye'll forgive me, Maggie, for makin' such a turrible mistake," he said, very humbly; "but 'tis me as thought I was doin' ye a great favor, so I did."

"That's all right, Mike," she told him, loftily, "an' mebbe ye wasn't so much to blame after all; but remimber this, that whiniver a likely lookin' bye says he's me nephew—ye'd better belave him, or Oi'll know the raison why!"

Jimmy looked dazed. He held the fatal purse in his hand gingerly, as though tempted to drop it, or give it back to his aunt. Hobart actually believed the generous self-sacrifice of the fine old woman had made an impression on the callous heart of the youth such as nothing else might have done.

"I'll be goin' then, Maggie," said the big officer, as though feeling himself an intruder, after making such a miscue, and ruffling the feelings of his good friend the cook, whose hot coffee and choice morsels had doubtless many a time contributed to his comfort when on his cold night-beat.

Jimmy too looked as though he would willingly have slipped away after the officer; but being a street boy, with his wits sharpened through experience, he doubtless quickly guessed the profession of that stern looking gentleman whom Mike had addressed so civilly as "Mr. Hobart."

"See here, Jimmy," said the detective, "for the sake of your good aunt I'm going to take you in hand and make a man of you. Hobart is my name, and I'm a detective. Now what she said fooled Mike easily enough, but I know better what caused you to slip out of this house last night without waiting for any breakfast, as you have always done before. Now, don't look frightened, because I'm not meaning to undo her fine act by accusing you of taking her purse. First of all remove the money, and then hand the purse back to Maggie, with thanks in your heart, as well as on your lips!"

The old woman threw her fat arms around the lad's neck and strained him to her ample bosom.

"Och! hone! if only ye knowed how much Oi love ye, me that would lay down me life to save yer sowl, Oi'm sure ye'd change your ways, an' be a cridit to yer mother, in Paradise this blessed minute. Do whativer he wants ye to, Jimmy; 'tis the wan chanct of yer life to make good. Promise me ye will, laddie—till yer Aunt Maggie ye are meanin' to quit the life that kills, an' starrt all over agin!"

Hobart held out his card to the boy, and told him where to find him. When he shook hands his grip seemed to enthuse Jimmy with a new resolution.

"I'll keep me faith with ye, Mister Hobart!" Jimmy said, with set lips.

"An' glory be!" ejaculated the highly pleased Maggie, "whin a Maloney, or Toole says *that*, he manes it for kapes, so he does, sir!"

"Take Jimmy with you to the kitchen, Maggie," said the detective, "and feed as you see best; but not a word about the other happening, remember. I do not wish to have the news get abroad as yet. Jimmy, a word or two with you before you go. Tell me, did you slip out of the house by the side door?"

"Yis, sir, that's what I did," and the boy let his eyes fall again.

"Do you happen to know what time that was?" continued the detective.

"I heard a clock strike the hour, sir, an' it was just four," said Jimmy.

"That's all, Jimmy. Remember I'll be looking for you tomorrow night. And I think we're going to get on very well together, you and I."

When they had withdrawn Hobart rubbed his hands together, and said to Roland:

"Very interesting, as far as it went, and affording an insight into the workings of the human heart; but as to bringing us any nearer our ultimate goal, the discovery of the miscreant whose hand felled your honored father, Roland, we can really count no perceptible gain. But at least the skies have been cleared, and I feel satisfied to devote my energies untrammeled to the one line of acton promising returns. So, Roland, come with me; we are going straight to the guilty wretch and denounce him."

First Hobart went back to the sleeping room connected with Mr. Bragg's den as though to revive his recollection of certain facts. Soon he opened the seldom-used hall door.

"Come in here, Roland," he called softly and the young man with a shudder passed into the back room.

"Bend over here," remarked the detective, gravely. "I want you to take notice of this soiled mark on the light carpet. You will find there are a number of them, and that they range from the open window yonder directly toward the connecting door."

"It looks very much to me, sir, like the impression of a bony human foot," said the young man, eagerly. "Yes, I can plainly make out the marks of both heel and toes; and whoever made it must have been without any covering on his feet."

"That's correct, son," said Hobart, smiling grimly. "I imagine the party was never very much addicted to wearing shoes, for a fact. Do you remember my asking if your father had any disfigurement in connection with his feet? My motive was to prove conclusively to myself that these tracks could never have been made by *him*. Since then I have discovered scores of these same imprints, and in every instance where the left

foot was concerned I could note that the malformation existed—the small toe was missing!"

"Yes, sir, I can understand," said Roland, "that would prove an excellent clue!"

"It will surely serve to convict the assassin—when we have finally succeeded in locating him," Hobart assured him. "Now as to this," and he picked up the fatal red frog, which apparently he himself had fetched from the den while passing through, "I am convinced that it only had an incidental connection with the crime. By that I mean it may have attracted the attention of the intending murderer at the last moment, and he snatched it up on impulse, perhaps at the same time dropping this ugly weapon, which I chance to already know he had carried through the grounds, and when he entered this house at dead of night, on pillage, or revenge bent."

This time it was the brass cylinder, or two-foot fragment of an old gas chandelier pipe, with its jointed end, that he picked up.

"You are adding to my deep interest, sir," announced Roland, humbly, "and I keep trying to follow you as best I may, considering that I am but a layman, unaccustomed to this sort of thing."

"Let me explain first what I have learned concerning the devious ways by which this odious wretch forced his passage into your father's sleeping room here, from which he could enter the den and strike. He came by yonder open window. To reach this he passed out of another, which opens into the hall; and then crept along on the outside ledge that spans the gap between."

"It sounds almost incredible, sir," burst from Roland. "I know how shallow that ledge is, and although something of an athlete myself I should not like to attempt to negotiate it."

"Nevertheless," Hobart went on to say, smiling significantly, "this party seemed to think nothing of such a puny feat. It was done with ease. He also retreated by the same route, though it would have been so much easier to have passed out by the door. Apparently, however, this miscreant could not grasp any other method of retreating save than by the same one that had allowed of his entrance. His is what you might call a 'one-track mind.'

"Now, when I went into your attic," continued Hobart, as though reminiscently, "I found, just as I half anticipated, that Jeffries' fairies and hobgoblins were of a breed such as he never could have imagined in his wildest Irish dreams. In the accumulated dust I found this same track many times. It took me to an open attic window, where the daring invader of your peaceful household had made his first entry, coming from the roof, to which he must have mounted by means of that large, decaying tree, the limbs of which you told me scraped against the gutter, and produced many weird sounds, that doubtless oftimes interested Jeffries."

"Then he must have been a regular circus athlete and gymnast, sir!" exclaimed Roland, aghast; "for as a boy I remember trying that feat, and always failing."

"Oh! this is quite an accomplished climber with whom we have to deal," the detective assured him. "Wait until you see him, and you'll agree with me that it was entirely in his line. I'd match him against any steeple-jack living, and feel confident of winning the stakes."

"But," Roland persisted, "I'm also wondering how the fellow could manage to squeeze through that small attic window, and hanging from the eaves as he must have done?"

"Nothing wonderful for him to accomplish," chuckled the detective. "Not only that, son, but our remarkable athlete must have kept hold of this brass cylinder every minute of the time, remarkable as it may seem."

"You have me guessing, sir, I honestly admit," said Roland, helplessly.

"And now," added Mr. Hobart, "I am ready to lead you to confront the guilty wretch, whom you can denounce, and have arrested if you choose. We will pass outside, and take up the case from the foot of the tree where he landed, after making his hurried exit. Come, Roland, the end of the case is close at hand, I assure you!"

CHAPTER SIX

TRACKED TO HIS LAIR

THE overshadowing factory building hummed with industry, and heads could be noticed bobbing up here and there as soon as they appeared.

"Here at the foot of the last remaining old tree," said Hobart, seriously, "we see those queer imprints again. Notice also that there is more or less dead bark cluttered about, undoubtedly displaced by this nimble climber. You will also see that the marks come from back of the house!"

"Oh! the rear wall!" suddenly exclaimed Roland, looking expectant.

"Exactly," Hobart added, nodding his head encouragingly. "We did hear something in connection with that same wall, didn't we?"

"It was Maggie who said it—the night when there was thunder and lightning, but no rain," Roland went on to say, briskly. "She looked out, worried about the clothes left hanging on the line, and saw a dreadful form on the wall."

"H'm! remember how Maggie was quite so persistent about describing it as the Old Nick?" chuckled the other.

"Oh! her vivid Irish imagination would account for that, sir," Roland remarked; and cause her to discover a forked tail, and cloven hoofs, where none such existed. But you seemed to believe she did see *something*, sir?"

"Without a question, son; and we aim now to follow the trail over the wall as I did once before to a limited extent. A ladder will allow us

to take a look at this foreign colony living in tenements back yonder, with rows on rows of red peppers hanging along the galleries telling the story of their nationality."

"You believe this party lives there, then, sir?"

"Just as likely as not," replied the detective; and then Roland heard him give an exclamation as of sudden fresh interest; turning his head the young man discovered that someone had entered the garden through the door in the wall.

"The Italian writer of those threatening notes!" gasped Roland.

"And the same wild-looking man I saw lounging beyond the wall," added Mr. Hobart, eagerly. "Yes, it must be Benedotta himself. Come with me, and we shall settle this vendetta without much trouble."

The foreigner saw them approaching and stood waiting. His dark face looked scowling, and Roland could easily picture him as a crafty assassin, urged on to a deed of blood because of the insane idea that had seized upon his mind.

"You are Anthony Benedotta, are you not?" demanded Hobart, sternly.

The Italian nodded his head in the affirmative. He kept one hand hidden from view under the flap of his velvet jacket; Roland could easily imagine his nervous fingers playing with the handle of a keen-pointed stiletto.

"Some time ago," continued the detective, "you sent a letter to the old gentleman living in this house. You complained that he had wronged your noble family, and warned him that you meant to execute vengeance on him. Is that true?"

The man gave a quick, half-savage and defiant nod.

"It haf been a burning wrong that keeps eating into my heart, so I must wipe it out with his blood," he mumbled, in an ugly way. "I gif him the time to undo this wrong, but he refuse to pay attention. Las' night it come again to me, that spirit of my father, and say never can he sleep in peace in his tomb till the Madonna be recover, or the insult wiped out in blood. So I am here to demand that Signor Bragg see me, and settle it once for all."

"Then you shall see him, Benedotta!" snapped Hobart, suddenly making up his mind how best to get rid of this threatening source of trouble. "Roland, wait here until I return. Follow me, Benedotta, and I will take you to Mr. Bragg."

The determined Italian trotted after Hobart, and entered the house, still keeping that hand under his coat, as if meaning to be prepared for treachery. Opening the door of the den the detective passed in. The Italian in the act of following him came to a sudden stop. His eyes had fallen on that dreadful figure sprawled upon the floor. He stood there, staring for a full half minute; his concealed hand came from under his coat but it gripped no stiletto. Then whirling on his heel Benedotta vanished like a puff of smoke.

When Hobart, after locking the den door again, reached the exit it was to see Benedotta arrive at the door in the wall. One frightened look back did he take, and then plunged hurriedly through; doubtless to the astonishment of the owners of all those heads seen at the factory windows.

"It seemed like the hand of Destiny," Hobart was saying as he rejoined the young man who had viewed the hasty flight of Benedotta with interest. "One thing certain, you will never be troubled with Anthony again; I imagine the one predominant thought in his clouded brain after this will be that he must forever hide from the minions of the law, searching for him to pay the penalty for murder. So that episode is wound up, and we can now resume our investigation where it was interrupted by his abrupt coming on the scene."

Step by step the detective led the way back through the desolated garden. Roland easily discovered that his companion was following a plain trail. So in due time they arrived at the wall, where Hobart stopped.

"Here is where he came down, and went up again, you notice," he said, pointing to certain marks on the discolored surface of the high wall.

"Is that red spot dried blood, sir?" asked the young man, shuddering.

"Just what it is, Roland, but not from the source you imagine. See, every place where his foot touched the face of the wall similar marks can be found. He cut one of his feet, possibly on a sharp bit of glass. Now, could you get me the the short ladder I noticed sticking out from the cellar door?"

When Roland returned with this it was placed against the wall, after which the detective climbed up and sat upon the top, an event that caused a score more heads to appear at factory windows, though he paid no attention to them.

It was not a very inviting picture upon which they now looked. A score and more of dirty-looking children, evidently of foreign birth, played amidst the ill-kept back-yard products of the swarming Italian tenement building.

Others could be seen on various rear galleries that were built in tiers, where women with gay-colored handkerchiefs bound about their heads bent over wash-tubs, or else hung a collection of garments on a myriad of lines stretched to tall poles and manipulated by pulleys. But although he had never been able to shudder, on account of its untidy appearance, strange to say young Roland Bragg now found himself taking it in with no such feeling of repugnance.

That swarming tenement possibly housed the one who had murdered his father. Just then a stern sense of justice—he would not call it revenge—actuated the young man; for surely the ruffian whose cruel hand had struck that merciless blow should be made to pay such penalty as the outraged law demanded.

Sitting there Hobart calmly viewed each succeeding gallery as though deciding in his mind just where their trail should lead them. Their

appearance on the top of the wall was the signal for a fresh outburst of cries from the ragged children below. Hobart waved his hand at them, and paid no further heed.

"Was it revenge, or simply a desire to rob the house, that caused him to go to all that trouble so as to break in, sir?" asked the puzzled Roland.

"Ah; that is just the point I'm still a bit cloudy on, son," the detective frankly admitted. "The *motif* for the deed still remains a mystery, though I expect to be able to soon clear that up. How hatred could be generated in such a case passes my comprehension; but nevertheless it must be so. There is nothing more to be accomplished here, and we had better be moving on to the explanation of the whole matter. So we'll pass out into Pettigrew Lane, and come around here to the tenement."

"I shall be very glad when it is all over, Mr. Hobart."

"No doubt you will, Roland, and perhaps it's been a bit heartless for me to have prolonged your agony of mind; but I have my own way of unraveling these queer mysteries, you know; but I promise you it will soon be finished now."

They were soon in Pettigrew Lane, where passersby gave them no especial heed; though had the news of the tragedy gone forth a crowd must have assembled, and curious eyes be glued on the tall wall sheltering the grounds of the house where the so-called miser lived.

Making a turn at the end of the narrow street they rounded a bustling factory building, finally arriving at the other thoroughfare where the swarming Italian tenement fronted. When Hobart led the way into the building he kept on ascending the ill-conditioned stairways until they reached the fourth floor. The detective walked along toward one of the rear apartments that looked out across the forlorn garden, and the house that stood like an oasis in its midst.

Roland began to sniff the air. He knew the odor of cabbage, of onions, as well as various other cooked viands, but this was something entirely different. Hobart hearing him gave a short laugh.

"Notice it, eh, son?" he remarked, with a chuckle. "Not very delightful, and possibly you have guessed the cause. Queer, isn't it, how other dwellers under this roof haven't objected before now to such company; but then these foreigners are a queer crowd. Now let's see what's in store for us."

He knocked loudly on a certain door he had selected. Immediately heavy-soled, perhaps hobnailed shoes could be heard scuffling about on the other side; then the door opened, and they were able to peer into a room cloudy with tobacco smoke. What seemed to be a savage snarl greeted them.

"Yonder, son, is the miserable creature responsible before the law for the tragic death of your poor father," and as Hobart made this thrilling announcement he suddenly thrust out a hand, and pointed to a corner of the ill-smelling room. A feeling almost of repulsion passed over Roland Bragg. He saw the short, hairy lips drawn back to reveal cruel-looking white teeth; while the small baleful eyes of the monster glared at him most savagely; and again that low vicious snarl told of its intense dislike to strangers.

Somehow there flashed into Roland's mind what Maggie had said when describing the shock to her system on that wild night as she looked out from her elevated window, to see a repulsive object squatted on the top of the wall, appearing so like Satan to her excited fancy.

There were two rough-looking men, besides a small woman, in the room. They betrayed signs of nervousness at the abrupt entrance of Hobart and his young companion.

"Who owns that beast?" demanded the detective, with authority in his voice, as he pointed at the monster monkey; which action served to bring out further demonstrations of disapproval from the chained creature.

"Eet belong to me, Signor," said the larger of the two men. "Ver' harmless monk, Jocko he be; but we haf jus' settle heem hash, Signor, please. He ees goin' get out here right away queek, believe me. We haf reach the end, and stand no more nonsense from heem!"

"Oh! say you so, my friend," sneered the detective, "your resolution does credit to your sagacity, I must remark; but your decision comes rather late in the day, after your strange pet has played such a grim joke, for which I imagine his life will pay forfeit."

The two men must have understood him partially, for they exchanged alarmed looks. "We pay, all right, Signor; how mooch—five, mebbe ten dol'," and as he said this eagerly the larger man exhibited a fat roll of bills.

"No money—put it back!" said Hobart, sternly. "How did your beast get loose last night; tell the truth, and it may go easier with you?"

His manner now had them all panic-stricken; since they began to realize that Jocko must have been doing something much more serious than stealing, or even smashing a show-window with a rock in order to pilfer tempting fruits from within.

"Eet ver' bad job!" exclaimed the owner of the beast. "Heem break link in de chain, where heem get rusty. Zen heem slick out, and I tell you Meester not one hear heem. Eet be long time after I wake up, and zere be Jocko, heem just come back, whine lak ev'ryt'ing, and lick hees foot. Mooch blood—you see, we fix heem up. But eet be all right now; Jocko go Central Park in cage. Me, I haf no use for heem—too much complain—too mooch bother all time."

"And I suppose," continued Hobart, meaningly, "every time Jocko did break loose you had some difficulty getting the rascal back here again?"

"He gif me mooch trouble zat sure, Signor; want to play ze hob wif everyt'ing. Ze wife she

say he haf ze devil in heem," admitted Felipe, grinning.

"And she wasn't the only woman who compared the ugly beast with Satan, as we happen to know, eh, Roland? Now Felipe, some of your neighbors must have complained of these pranks of Jocko's; how about the old gentleman living in the house behind the high wall there?"

The two Italians exchanged hasty glances.

"Eet be ver' true, boss, he come up here one time an' carry on like he mad. Heem say Jocko tak' to climbin' up an' look in through ze windows, an' make heem heart near jump out of ze mouth. Heem say he not stand for eet any more. Oh! but he be ver' angry; we haf ze bad time when zat ole Signor Bragg he come up an' complain."

"Listen, Felipe; did he *strike* Jocko when he visited you?" demanded Hobart.

The man nodded his tousled head in assent.

"Zat ees what heem do, Signor. We haf hold Jocko, he so ver' crazy to get at heem. He snap hees teeth, and car' on so fierce. Monk never forget such blow. But why you ask me zat, boss?"

From among other fragments of doubtful value the detective picked up a two-foot section of heavy brass tubing. Roland saw it was almost a duplicate of the one they found in Praxton Bragg's little den at the time the detective conducted his search, only lacking that weighty metal at the end.

"See here, there was a second brass tube like this, with a heavy knob at one end, wasn't there, Felipe?" he demanded, sternly; "two of them, you know."

"Sure; you want heem, boss?" and the man started a hurried search, but the more he looked in vain the wider grew the smile on Hobart's face.

"You can't find it, Felipe," he ventured; "and for a good reason too, because your cunning and revengeful Jocko, trained monk that he must be, carried it off with him last night, for a distinct purpose. I chance to know where that identical brass cylinder is lying right now, Roland; do you require any more corroborative evidence to prove that your poor father came to his death through the vindictiveness and never-dying hate of that snarling hairy monster over yonder in the corner?"

"I am quite satisfied, sir, you have run down the guilty one," said the young man, a look of mingled wonder and relief on his face. Let us get out of here, Mr. Hobart; this fetid atmosphere makes me feel faint. And besides I am, as you must know, fairly wild to tell Elsie the amazing truth."

"I shall accompany you, Roland," remarked the detective," and substantiate your thrilling story. I congratulate you at least on the speedy dissipation of the cloud that seemed to be gathering over your head; and hope that when time has in part healed this wound you will both be very happy."

They left the Italians chattering among themselves, and looking considerably awed; for possibly they had managed to understand the drift of what Hobart had said concerning the tragic death of the old curio collector; enough of it at least to grasp the fact that Jocko must have been guilty of something dreadful that might get them into trouble with the authorities.

On the way downstairs Roland found a chance to inquire further.

"You have suspected the actual truth from the very start, I imagine, sir?" he ventured to say, at which the detective shook his head as he replied:

"Not exactly that, son; but a number of things aroused my curiosity, and my suspicions as to the possible facts soon followed. For instance there were scratches showing where the assassin had crawled in through the small window up in the attic. I even found a little bunch of queer-looking short red hair attached to a splinter of wood, that I have right now tucked away in my folder.

"Then the shape of those footprints had me guessing, for somehow they seemed to differ from the ordinary human foot. When Maggie told us about seeing a 'divvle' on that wall in the storm, and grinning up at her, I felt that I was getting pretty close to the actual truth.

"By the way, Roland, I don't suppose you took any notice of the left hindfoot of Jocko? I did, and sure enough the beast at some time has lost a toe, which fact you remember was my most convincing clue. We can at our leisure follow his course up the tree to the roof, and then in through that attic window; which trick as a nimble simian he was able to carry out with little difficulty, even carrying the brass cylinder along with him, doubtless meaning to use it upon the old man who had struck him.

"And so closes one of the most interesting cases in my whole experience, as well as a most thrilling drama. Let us go to Elsie, now, Roland, and relieve her mind of its burden of horror; after which you may ring up Police Headquarters, and tell them to send men around here to take charge. I will stand back of you, Roland, never fear."

Eventually, after the matter had all been threshed out, the old curio collector decently buried, and Roland happily married, the house back of the wall was sold to a company desirous of adding an extension to their factory.

At the request of Hobart young Bragg presented him with the ugly red frog from the tombs of Egypt, and which had figured so prominently in the tragedy, also the knobbed brass cylinder upon which Hobart had leaned for one of his convincing clues in solving the mystery of the night.

At last accounts Jimmy was surely making good under the detective's watchful and approving eye, to the great joy of his Aunt Maggie, who has a position for life with the young couple.

Where The Thief Slipped Up

By FRANK H. WILLIAMS

PETER DURKING, the best detective on the police force, surveyed himself surreptitiously in the tall mirror located in the downstairs hall of the Van Stitten mansion. The mirror reflected a small, wiry, clean-cut man dressed in evening clothes. The eyes were whimsical, the whole appearance of the man alert and aggressive. But there was a downward sag to the corners of the mouth which suggested mental perturbation of some sort or other.

"Doggone a dress suit!" soliloquized Durking to himself. "If there is anything on earth I hate it's to doll up in one of these open-face things and come to a ball. Doggone a ball! I'd rather be out on a freezing night scouting for stick-up men in a railroad yard than be hanging around here waiting for a society thug to grab off a bit of jewelry. I'll never forgive the chief for sending me on this job instead of wishing it on some other guy."

Thinking of his work reminded him of the fact that he had come onto the job in such a hurry that he wasn't exactly sure of what he was expected to do. He knew that old Homer Van Stitten, the eccentric recluse, was giving a coming-out party to his niece, Muriel Van Stitten, who had just arrived from the West. But the rest of it—what was the rest of it?

Durking moved to a distant corner of the hall and pulled from his pocket the letter which the chief had that afternoon received from old Mr. Van Stitten and which the chief had turned over to Durking upon the latter's return to the central office early in the evening.

"DEAR CHIEF: You have probably noticed in the newspapers that I am giving a ball for my niece, Muriel Van Stitten, who has just arrived from the West to visit me for the first time. This ball will be held at my home tonight. Word has gone about that Muriel will wear the famous Van Stitten diamond pendant which has been in our family for two hundred years. This is true. The pendant is now in my hands. I myself took it out of my safety deposit box this afternoon. But I have reason to fear that an effort will be made to steal this valuable jewel tonight. There has been an insistent attempt to buy the jewel during the past few months, and there has been a considerable amount of inquisitiveness on the part of alleged newspaper reporters who have called me up on the phone to know if Muriel is really to wear it. I want to circumvent any attempts to steal it, and so wish that you would detail your best man to attend the ball tonight as one of the guests. He will have no trouble in identifying Muriel and the pendant. If I myself attend the affair he can get in touch with me. But it is hardly likely that I will do more than look in at the ball, as I am much of a recluse, you know, and as my gout has been troubling me greatly recently.

"Thanking you in advance, I am,

"HOMER VAN STITTEN."

The first thing to do, of course, was to identify Muriel; the second was to keep a close watch on her during the evening.

It was an easy task to identify the Western niece of the eccentric millionaire. One look about the huge, brilliantly lighted ballroom revealed the object of his quest to Durking. There was no mistaking the brilliant cheeked, bright-eyed young girl who stood near the center of the room welcoming guests while a little flock of men stood respectfully near, seeking dances and trying to impress themselves upon her attention. And there was no mistaking the flaming stone which hung from a thin platinum chain about her neck and glowed and gleamed and flashed against her satiny skin. It was the famous Van Stitten pendant—the diamond which had been in the family for two hundred years and which, on its modern chain, looked positively regal.

As the ball got under full sway Durking looked over the guests speculatively. Many of the people there he recognized as famous members of society. Such ones, he knew, could be eliminated as possible stealers of the diamond. All the other guests, in appearance, at least, seemed to be in the same class with those he knew — straightforward, high-class people, who by no stretch of the imagination could be conceived of as getting by barefaced theft any bit of jewelry, no matter how greatly they might covet it.

And yet Durking felt his nerves becoming tense. By some indefinable sixth sense he scented trouble in the air. He felt, without having anything definite upon which to base this feeling, that there was going to be something doing. He tried to shake off this feeling. He told himself that it was silly, absurd, that there was no real foundation for it; and yet the feeling persisted. His tensity grew and with it came a rising excitement. He knew, as certainly as though the prospective thief had tipped him off, that an effort would be made that night to steal the Van Stitten pendant!

At 11 o'clock nothing had happened, but Durking's excitement had grown apace. At 11:30 the ball was progressing along its normal course.

But at 12 o'clock there came an interruption. The interruption occurred at the conclusion of a fox trot. The room had quieted down, it was almost still. Unexpectedly the doors at the far end of the ballroom were swung open and a tall, white-haired figure limped into the room.

"It's Van Stitten—Van Stitten himself!" cried one of the women standing near Durking.

Peter looked curiously down the length of the room at the newcomer. Often had Durking seen Van Stitten's photos in the newspapers and magazines, but, like so many others, this was the first time he had ever seen the recluse in life. The figure of the man was very like his photos—aristocratic, impressive. He limped a little, of course, on account of the gout, but his eyes were brilliant, as Peter could see, even at the distance he was from him, and his manner was incisive.

Peter looked curiously down the length of the room. People clustered about him. Muriel ran toward him and Durking followed rapidly in her wake.

As Peter hurried forward he found his pulses beating rapidly. For some reason or other his sixth sense told him that the affair was about to reach its crisis. He kept his eyes on Muriel and the chain encircling her neck as he hurried forward, but out of the corner of his eye he caught a little movement at one side of the room. A man in evening clothes was slipping out of the room through an obscure doorway.

Now there was no logical reason for Durking to connect the movement of this man with any effort to steal the Van Stitten pendant, but connect it he did, mainly because of the fact that there seemed to be no logical reason for any guest to take an abrupt departure in an unobtrusive manner like this.

When Muriel reached Van Stitten, Durking was close behind her. A little knot of people formed themselves about the two. Durking was standing next to Muriel, trying to identify the persons who were nearest him. At that moment the lights went out!

Durking's first thought was to strike a match quickly. His second was that now was the time when the thief, if there was a thief present, would make his attempt to secure the pendant.

Durking's hand shot forward toward Muriel. He touched her dress in the dark. He noted dimly that there was a general commotion in the room and that several matches were being struck some distance away. He raised his hand toward Muriel's neck and lightly touched her skin. H could not feel the chain of the pendant.

At this moment someone laughingly lighted a match near Durking. Peter gave one glance at Muriel. The pendant was gone!

The match flared out before Peter could identify more than two or three of the people who were standing near Muriel. These he did identify were well known society people—folks who would be the least unlikely of anyone in the room to be responsible for such a theft. It seemed to Peter, as he struggled to light a match of his own, that there was considerable movement near him. Perhaps the thief was making a getaway.

Then, before Durking could strike his match, the lights went on again. There was considerable laughter. The orchestra began playing. People started dancing. As yet no one had noticed the absence of the pendant.

Then Durking saw Van Stitten gazing fixedly at Muriel's neck. He saw Van Stitten advance close to his niece and say something to her in a low tone. He saw Muriel's face turn ghastly white and her hand fly to her throat. And then he saw Van Stitten take her arm and lead her unobtrusively through the door out of the ballroom. The door closed behind them, with only a few people, so far as Durking could see, noticing their departure.

Durking, tingling with excitement and aghast with dismay at the manner in which the theft had been perpetrated, followed them quickly.

It was into a little waiting room that Peter hurried. There were three doors in this room, one at the far end leading into a hall and one on either side leading into other rooms. Peter looked into the room on the right. No one was there. He hurried to the room on the left and looked in. This room proved to be a sort of a den, and in it he saw Van Stitten walking back and forth and Muriel slumped into an easy-chair, her face utterly white, her eyes terror-stricken.

Van Stitten looked up quickly at Durking's entrance. Muriel, too far frightened to notice much of anything, looked at him with vacant eyes.

"I—I am from the Central office," explained Peter hurriedly, handing Van Stitten the latter's letter to the chief. "I have been watching Miss Muriel all evening. I was near her when the theft occurred. "I—

Van Stitten's hands shook as he took the letter. His eyes blazed.

"You're a fine detective!" he cried. "Why didn't you prevent this? Are you a wooden man, or what?"

"We might—er—we have something to work on," stammered Peter, disregarding the tirade. "I'm sure the thief had an accomplice. I saw someone slip out of the room by a small door in the side of the wall just before the lights went out. I'm sure that man turned off the lights. Now if we find him we can—"

"Stop it!" exclaimed Van Stitten authoritatively. "I'll not have my guests insulted by any police investigation. The pendant is gone and that's all there is to it. I'd rather lose ten pendants like it than to cause annoyance to any of these people who have come here at my invitation tonight!"

"But—"

"You've failed!" exclaimed the recluse harshly. "You've fallen down on the job! Go back to your central office and tell the chief to get some good detectives on his staff!"

Durking hesitated. He glanced at Muriel and saw her looking at him with wide, despairing eyes. He turned back to Van Stitten and noted the cynical look on the latter's face. Seeing this look on the millionaire's face roused Durking's fighting spirit. He'd see the thing through, no matter what Van Stitten's attitude was.

"Now," began Durking again.

"Get out! Quick!" cried Van Stitten roughly.

For still a moment longer Peter hesitated. Then Van Stitten advanced toward him menacingly.

Durking looked at Van Stitten for a moment and then, as the latter continued to come ahead, Peter turned and left the room. There really wasn't anything else for him to do.

But as he left his eyes shone and his pulses pounded. He was excited, aroused, eager, almost triumphant. He had found a clue, and what a clue! It was clear, unmistakable, and what a startling case it promised!

He raced downstairs to the servants' quarters. There he found Edwards, the oldest servant in Mr. Van Stitten's employ.

"When did Mr. Van Stitten's niece arrive?" questioned Durking, after identifying himself, telling Edwards what had happened and cautioning the latter to keep strict silence.

"She came from the West this morning," was the reply.

"When did Van Stitten give her the pendant?"

"This evening, just before he left for Dr. Johnson's to get electrical treatment for his gout."

"Muriel, of course, had never seen the pendant before?"

"No."

After a few more questions Durking stopped and thought quickly for a few moments. Then he gave some rapid instructions to Edwards. The latter looked amazed at first, then interested, then grim.

"So that's what happened?" Edwards muttered. "A slick crook, all right, all right."

"Yes, mighty slick!" Durking replied. "But, remember, do exactly as I say."

"Yes, I'll remember and follow your instructions exactly."

Durking left Edwards and hurried upstairs again in search of Muriel. He found her on the dance floor. Following the dance he managed to speak to her, though she seemed to avoid him.

"Where is your uncle?" he questioned.

"I don't know."

"What happened after I left that room?"

"He—he told me it didn't really matter and that I was to come back here and have a good time."

"Ah!" ejaculated Durking. "Now I'm going to ask you to do something," he continued. "I'm going to ask you to go back there to that room and wait there for about ten or fifteen minutes."

There was real fear in the look she gave him at this.

"Why?" she asked.

"Because I'm a policeman and people generally do what the police want them to do when there's been a big theft like that," Durking smiled.

"All right," said the girl listlessly.

Durking took her by the arm and piloted her through the crowd, smiling and laughing as he did so. Muriel responded only feebly to his efforts to make their little trip across the dance floor seem perfectly natural, however.

Durking noted with satisfaction, when they entered the room, that one of the servants was standing by the door. This was evidently the man he had requested Edwards to place there.

"I won't be gone long," said Durking to the girl. "Just stay here and when I come back the whole thing will be cleared up."

"I—I hope so," murmured Muriel lifelessly.

From this room Durking hurried downstairs again. Edwards was waiting for him in the lower hall.

"Are we all set?" queried Durking.

Edwards nodded.

"Van Stitten is—?" questioned the detective.

"Up in the library," grinned Edwards. "When I went in he told me to get out or he'd kick me out. Very bad temper, indeed!"

Durking smiled, too.

"Come on," he said, "let's see what we'll find out in the garage."

Edwards nodded to two or three other male servants. They came forward eagerly. These were the men Durking had previously, in his little talk with Edwards, told the latter to provide.

Down the walk from the rear of the house to the garage the men hurried. As they neared the garage a faint humming sound came from within.

"Huh," said Durking, grinning at Edwards, "sounds like someone was tuning up the car to take a little trip."

Edwards laughed softly.

"He's going to take a trip, all right," he answered, "but it isn't going to be in that car and it isn't going to be the sort of a trip he's expecting to take."

One of the men went around to the rear of the garage. When a low whistle from this man signified that he was at his station, the other men, including Edwards and Durking, swiftly entered the garage.

A single light was burning. By its rays they saw a man stooping over the engine of a pow-

erful looking car. The man was in evening clothes.

"Some class to this chauffeur, eh?" cried Peter loudly.

The man raised himself quickly. Before he had more than time to take in the situation Durking had clapped handcuffs on him.

"This is the accomplice," Peter declared, "unless he's Mr. Van Stitten's chauffeur."

"I never saw him before! He's most certainly not Mr. Van Stitten's chauffeur!" rather violently cried Edwards.

"I rather imagine we'll find his finger prints in the records," remarked Durking.

The prisoner glared, started to speak, and then, apparently thinking better of it, merely continued to glare.

"Unless I'm badly mistaken," said Durking, "we'll find the real chauffeur over here in a dark corner of the garage, and—also—the other man, the man we want to find."

Edwards switched on all the lights in the garage. A moment's search revealed two trussed figures at the back of the garage. One of these was the chauffeur, who, though conscious, was gagged. The other man was unconscious. The two men were released quickly.

"Someone—this guy, probably—hit me over the head with something while I was waiting in front of Dr. Johnson's place for Mr. Van Stitten to come out," the chauffeur explained.

"Just as I thought," said Durking. "You stay here and guard this full-dress crook chauffeur for a while. I think I'll have you drive the thief and his accomplice to the police station later on."

Edwards, in the meantime, had been exclaiming over the other man and attempting to revive him, but without much success. Now, at Durking's direction, this other man was carried down the walk and up to the house. In the house the bearers carried the man up the stairs to the ballroom floor, where they halted in a dark hallway while Peter and Edwards went to the library.

Van Stitten was bending over a safe in a corner of the room as they entered. He looked up sharply and growled when he saw Durking.

"What is it now?" he cried.

"We've got the thief," Peter respectfully explained. "It's merely a matter of identification. Will you help us?"

For a moment Van Stitten hesitated. Then he nodded.

"All right," he said and came forward.

The three men — Durking, Van Stitten and Edwards—hurried to the den where Durking had left Muriel. The man on guard at the entrance grinned as they passed him. Muriel, pale and anxious looking, was slumped in a chair. She jumped to her feet as they entered and looked wildly from Van Stitten to Durking.

"Just a minute," said Peter. "Bring in the other man."

In a moment the unconscious man who had been found in the garage was brought in and laid on a davenport. Durking watched Muriel keenly as this was done. He saw her gaze wildly from the man on the couch to Van Stitten and back again. He saw Van Stitten's face turn white; he saw him turn as though about to run and then, as he made a dive toward a window, Peter was on him and had the handcuffs on his wrists. And as Peter did this he saw Muriel fly to the davenport and drop by it upon her knees.

"Uncle!" she cried. "Oh, I was so frightened! I didn't think you could change so. I didn't know what to think. This other man looked so much like you, and yet was so different!"

But the figure on the couch did not move. The real Van Stitten had been too grievously wounded to regain consciousness immediately.

Durking turned with a grin to the handcuffed man—the tall, aristocratic man who had so successfully palmed himself off as being the real Van Stitten.

"You got by with it pretty good," Durking declared. "What with having such a natural resemblance to Van Sitten and with that false beard to help you out. And then Van Stitten being a recluse that few people ever saw, and his niece only seeing him once this afternoon helped you. And then, too, coming in on the ball the way you did let you out of meeting any of the servants and threw the suspicion of being the chief on everyone but yourself. I suppose your accomplice thugged Van Stitten's chauffeur while Van Stitten was in at Dr. Johnson's, and that you thugged Van Stitten when he came out of the doctor's office, and then you took his place?"

The thief who had been posing as the millionaire sullenly nodded his head.

"Well, I'll just take the pendant," said Durking, running his right hand into the bulging side coat pocket of the thief and extracting the famous jewel.

"I'll just keep this until Van Stitten comes to himself again," said Durking.

An immense relief came into Muriel's eyes as she saw the gem again. Edwards and the other servants sighed with satisfaction.

"We'll be getting on our way to the station now," said Peter. "Yes, it was a good stunt, well conceived and well executed. That pretending to have gout was good, too. But that's where you slipped up—that's where you showed me at once and without a doubt that you weren't the real Van Stitten, and that's what made the rest easy."

The thief looked his question.

"You limped all right in the ballroom," explained Durking, "and when you were prancing up and down in the den before Miss Muriel. But when you told me I was no good and I'd better get out, and you came racing at me—then you forgot to limp!"

The Mystery In The Woods

By ARTHUR W. WELLS

PART FIRST

"GOOD MORNING, sir. I am here to engage your services as a detective if I can do so. Here is my card."

The speaker had just been ushered into the study Hare used as a private office in his own house.

He was a man of perhaps forty, tall and of slender frame, with pallid and sharply attenuated features, a thin gray mustache, and closely cut brown hair streaked with silver.

His dress suggested something of the dude, without being particularly fashionable. His manner was that of a well-informed and right-minded gentleman.

What most impressed Jim O'Hare and held him in an involuntary speculation was something remarkable about the man's eyes. Great, brilliant, burning black orbs, unutterbly melonecholy, with a despairing wildness lurking somewhere in their dephs.

The card he had given Jim bore the name: Steele Von D. Cheslie, Bramble Hollows, L. I.

"Be seated, Mr. Cheslie," said Jim, arising to push toward him a chair. "What is the matter wherein I may be of service to you?"

O'Hare's usually matter-of-fact fashion of address had become a trifle ceremonious. He was already acquainted with the name by reputation and knew Steele Von D. Cheslie was considered a personage of more than ordinary distinction in the financial and social world.

He was the owner of an elegant mansion in one of the most fashionable avenues of the city; and his country property at Bramble Hollows with its five hundred acres of cultivation and woodland, represented something like a quarter of a million beside.

"In what way can I be of service to you?" the detective repeated, as Cheslie sat silent, his burning eyes fixed on vacancy, his bloodless lips twitching as he seemed trying to put his errand into words.

"I believe my wife has been assassinated," was his startling announcement. "My wife and child both disappeared, and I have never been able to trace them. Latterly I have had horrible fears, and my torture of suspense has become maddening."

"When did they disappear?" inquired O'Hare.

"It is five years—five years this last October," said he, obviously struggling desperately to command his composure.

"So long as that," commented Jim in wonder.

"Just as long as that," he replied. "I had arranged my business for a trip to Europe. On the evening before the day the steamer sailed I left my house in the country. My wife and child accompanied me to the station; I kissed them good-by and boarded the train, which was just starting. From my coach window I saw them enter the automobile which was to take them back to Bramble Hollows, and from that hour to this I have never looked upon their faces."

"And during all these five years what efforts have you made to ascertain their whereabouts?" Jim queried in increasing wonder.

"I have made no efforts which have been successful, or I should not have come to you now," was his reply, which struck O'Hare as being a deliberate evasion.

"You must be as explicit as possible if you would have me help you," the officer told him.

"If you would help me you must come with me at once to Bramble Hollows; the clew is there; and with the clew in your hands you will not need my assurance that your time will be amply remunerated," he said.

It was not anxiety about remuneration which disturbed Jim; it was the reticence and singular manner of the man himself.

He seemed to understand O'Hare's hesitation, and a strange look momentarily convulsed his pallid face.

"I dare not be more explicit now," he continued. "But I beg you to come with me—I appeal to you as a broken-hearted husband and injured man appeals to his brother man."

"Certainly, I will go with you, Cheslie," Jim acquiesced at length. "Yet I think if you chose to enlighten me a little more, I should be better satisfied."

"Wait, and you will see," he returned, assuringly.

And so the detective allowed Cheslie to conduct him, blindfold as it were, to Bramble Hollows. They left the train at the small way station and turned into a narrow crossroad which skirted the strip of woodland.

There was quite a distance to traverse, and Jim was slightly surprised that he chose walking instead of a conveyance, he noticed, too, he seemed to shun observation. But Jim ventured no comment, and he offered no explanation.

After proceeding a mile or so they turned from the road into the wood itself—a charming fragment of forest, all ablaze with the splendid hues of an unwontedly tardy and mellow autumn.

"Where we turned into the wood my wife left the car," Mr. Cheslie said, after they had

walked something like a hundred rods down a winding, bushy path, which Jim perceived led to the house. "She meant to gather a few autumn leaves. And it was here Borrello overtook her. Great heavens, how I trusted that man!—and how crafty has been his deception, how diabolical his crime!"

Step by step O'Hare's companion's agitation had been increasing, step by step his burning eyes had become wilder, and his whole aspect more singularly impressive.

"It was here Francisco Borrello alarmed her by his professions of love—it was here my wife repelled him and turned to flee. It was there in the glade, in his outburst of fury, he struck the murderous blow; it is yonder by that clump of undergrowth his victim is buried," Cheslie resumed, in a whisper.

"If you know all this, Cheslie, why did you bring me here?" the detective demanded, not as politely as he might, perhaps.

He did not reply.

He had suddenly stopped by the clump of undergrowth; and he was staring with an unearthly gaze at a spot in the little glade where the hazy sunshine was faintly glimmering.

"It was there she knelt in terror, with her babe in her arms, and besought him to let her go in peace; and, like Mephistopheles, he answered: 'When I am aroused, beware.' It was there the demon raised his brutal hand against her. I can see it all. It was my dream, but yet I feel and know it is what actually occurred." Mr. Cheslie murmured, in that intense, unearthly whisper.

"A dream!" O'Hare ejaculated, in angry amazement. "Do you mean you have brought me here, that your horrible suspicions are based only on a dream—a nightmare vision?"

"Wait, and you will see," he answered just as he had done once before.

With his excitement rather more restrained, though none the less intense, he abruptly whirled about, thrust aside a tangle of bushes and brakes, and brought forth a couple of spades.

"I was lucky enough to get those out of the manufactory without being seen, in the small hours of the morning," he remarked, as he pushed one toward Jim.

"You are mad," the detective avowed, impatiently, with a strong inclination to turn and walk away.

"Mad?" he iterated, with a short, shuddering sigh. "Well, if I am, so would most men be at a moment such as this," he added, as he struck his spade into a heap of rotting leaves and twigs, and almost imperiously motioned Jim to assist him.

"I suppose I might as well see the thing out?" O'Hare thought with considerable irritation, as he reluctantly began the extraordinary service assigned to him.

For several minutes they worked in silence, Cheslie with feverish haste and Jim with lagging unwillingness, until they had piled the black mold in great mounds on either side a broad and shallow cavity.

Suddenly the man motioned Jim to stop, and lowered his own spade cautiously.

The steel clinked in contact with some metallic substance, and the next instant Cheslie uncovered what had once been a human hand, and which still clutched what was apparently the golden links of a gentleman's watch guard.

"It is part of the chain Borrello always wore; the pendant of a golden crescent holding a tiny diamond star. The star is wedged in these tarnished links—the crescent must have remained undetached from the other portion of the guard," Mr. Cheslie said thoughtfully as he handed the mutilated ornament to the officer.

But the thoughtful look vanished in a second.

Anguish, horror and vengeance blazed in his eyes.

With an aimlessly wild movement he lifted his spade in both his thin hands and hurled it far away in the undergrowth.

And then with a sound which was a groan or an execration, or both, he turned and fled toward the house.

"To see his agonizing fears verified has been too much for him, Jim thought as he gazed after the tall, bare-headed figure, dashing with weird swiftness down the path.

The detective proceeded carefully to remove the earth from the cavity until he had ascertained that the remains were indeed those of a woman.

The face was downward; the rotting black cloak and bonnet concealed the fleshless frame and a mass of fair hair; and the manner of burial, no less then the position of the body, told its own story of foul play.

After waiting a reasonable time for the return of his unmanned companion Jim, too, went up the winding foot-path to the house.

It was quite a pretentious structure with newly built oriels and balconies, and a fanciful observatory tower at one corner.

As he crossed the lawn, a powerful horse attached to a closely covered wagon galloped from a rear entrance and was driven rapidly up the highway. The detective fancied, too, there was some inexplicable sort of commotion inside the house, as he went up the steps and pulled the front door gong. He saw a servant at a side porch, and the girl certainly showed a scared countenance, and he distinctly heard tones which were of wrath or boisterous earnestness; and at one of the windows stood a little child hiding her face in a fleece of long, fair curls and crying bitterly.

The door was opened by a gentleman, who by a casual glance Jim could scarcely have distinguished from his companion of the wood, so striking was the resemblance between the two.

Only the man before him was younger, stout-

er, and his was a heavy brown mustache and hair unstreaked with gray.

"Can I see Mr. Cheslie?" asked the officer.

"I am Mr. Cheslie," the man answered, more haughtily than was at all necessary.

"I mean Mr. Steele Von Cheslie," said Jim, thinking perhaps they might be brothers.

"I am Steele Von Cheslie," was the reply, yet more haughtily delivered. "There is no other person, no other family indeed, of the name in the country. So if you have a message or anything of that kind, it is for me," he said, with a curiosity very badly disguised by his air of business-like interrogation.

O'Hare pondered for a moment.

If he was Mr. Cheslie, who then was the man who had guided Jim to that grave in the wood?

"Well, if you are Mr. Cheslie, Jim said at length, slowly, and with his eyes full upon him, "you are to be informed, I supposed, that a dead body has been found yonder in the wood——"

"A dead tramp, is it?" he observed, in tones Jim thought forced and uneasy. "The country has been infested with them lately."

"On the contrary, the body is that of a woman —long buried, it seems—and the victim of foul play, I am told," said the officer.

He started back and muttered in the Italian "patois."

"I have undertaken to investigate the crime—indeed, I was requested to do so in the interests of a gentleman claiming to be Mr. Cheslie," said O'Hare speaking guardedly, and feeling he was, somehow, gaining an advantage he had yet to define.

"The deuce!" he exclaimed. "Did he escape and try to ruin me? Has he sent a detective nosing into things?"

The exclamation was too impetuous to be cautious. Jim knew instantly that the person to whom he referred was his reticent companion of the day, and he knew, too, that whatever the mystery might be, he was in some way connected with it.

He realized, however, that he had made what might be regarded as a significant admission, and with a slight shrug he assumed an air of indifference, and of an ease amounting almost to levity.

"I see you have been the dupe of the lunatic Borello," he said with a smile which showed a peculiarly disagreetble mouth beneath his heavy mustache.

"Borello!" O'Hare repeated in bewilderment. "Would Borrello—sane or insane—have denounced himself as a murderer?"

"It was surely the crazy Borrello who has misled you," the master of Bramble Hollows persisted with another shrug. "He managed to escape from the asylum some days ago, and he rushed in here foaming and raving just before you came. But luckily a keeper had traced him to the neighborhood and was in the house at the moment. After a savage tussle we secured him, and he is on his way back to the asylum and a strait-jacket." The detective understood now who the occupant of the closed carriage was, and why there had seemed such a commotion about the house as he went up the steps.

"In the hallucinations of his madness he imagines himself to be anybody and everybody," O'Hare's interlocutor resumed as he remained silent.

"He was formerly a cashier in my factory, and there is some resemblance between us, I believe. Casual acquaintances occasionally mistook one of us for the other. It is a remembrance of this, perhaps, which originated that particular hallucination in his disordered brain."

But how would you account for his leading me to a spot which held an unguessed grave?" said the officer eyeing the man keenly.

"Oh, if you wish to work up the case, there is nobody to hinder you, and nobody to annoy you, either," he responded, almost insolently. "Of course the local authorities must be notified of the finding of the body, and there the matter ends, as far as you and I are concerned, I should think." The sleuth could only concur with his opinion, but he felt rather foolish and by no means satisfied as he left and walked toward the village.

That the man portrayed as a lunatic was Francisco Borrello, Jim did not for an instant believe.

That scene in the wood, when he had denounced Borrello as the destroyer of his wife, when he had so vividly described a tragedy which the unearthed body as vividly evinced, had aroused a thousand vague speculations which O'Hare could not yet frame into a distinct suspicion.

But even a maniac of the wildest hallucinations could scarcely conjure such a scene from sheer delusion.

And if Jim had been the dupe of an escaped lunatic, he was none the less convinced that there had been method in his madness.

If the body could be identified, or if Francisco Borrello could be produced, there might be some light thrown on the subject.

But as the matter rested, the case indeed seemed ended as far as O'Hare's services were concerned.

PART SECOND

OF course the detective was obliged to remain in the place until a coroner had been summoned, and his affidavit taken before the local functionaries.

In the meantime he had ample opportunity to pursue some desultory inquiries of his own.

The finding of the body had excited the usual curiosity among the villagers; but as the remarkable details of the discovery had not been

divulged, the majority of the people believed it to be only an ordinary case.

Some unknown woman had been overtaken by a sad fate; but it had all happened so long ago the truth would probably never be revealed. And there the subject was dismissed.

None of the villagers seemed to have any very lucid recollections of Francisco Borrello. While a cashier in the manufactory, he had been an inmate of the Cheslie household; he had also accompanied the family—or had been employed perhaps in some capacity on the trip—to Europe some years before.

From that trip Mr. Cheslie had returned a saddened and greatly altered man. He seemed to have left all geniality behind him in the European church-yard where his idolized young wife had been laid to rest.

"In the year he has been home he hasn't shown himself among us a dozen times," Jim heard one of the gossips say. "He keeps to himself, and hasn't a kind word for anybody as he used to have. And the way that poor, motherless little girl is let to run neglected is dreadful; and when he was so powerful fond of his wife, too!"

But it was of Francisco Borrello the officer wished to gain some tidings, and he was never mentioned.

"Faith, and it's not much we knew of him ever," he was told by one of the factory hands whose acquaintance he was diligently cultivating. "Another boss we had after the master went to Europe, and it was new men the boss got with the discharge of the old hands."

"You are one of the old hands, then," O'Hare remarked. "Do you remember Borrello's wife?"

"Sure, and it's niver a wife he had. It's a fine bachelor Borrello was, with never a mind to look at the darlingest crathure ever born," was the answer.

"And what made him crazy?" asked the detective.

"And is it crazy he is? Then, begorra, it's somebody you must ask which isn't meself. Sure he was sensible enough that same time five years ago—as sensible as the master just! And, bedad, they were as much alike, the two of them—as one glass which nades filling is like another. And there's the fine hint for you which I wouldn't be maning at all, sure," said Jim.

But whether he meant the hint or not, the detective assured him that he could not permit his glass to remain empty so long as he had the pleasure of his society.

And as his society was becoming rather more expensive than it had been instructive, Jim presently left him to the delights of a freshly brimming schooner and strolled out into the village street.

It was quite dark and his train was almost due, when he turned into an unfrequented by-way which shortened the disteance to the station.

Jim was nearing an angle in the path when he heard footsteps and saw a person approaching.

He wore a long ulster, and his hat was slouched forward; in the gloom Jim could not see his features plainly.

But he noticed he was walking slowly, peering from side to side as if looking for some one or something.

With the impulse of the moment Jim stepped aside into the deeper shadows at the angle of the path, and he passed without perceiving the officer.

As he disappeared Jim stepped forth again and a girl sprang eagerly toward Jim and threw herself into Jim's arms, which he had opened—not precisely to receive her, however.

"Oh, I was so afraid you wouldn't come!" she cried, sobbing, as she flung a pair of robust hands upon Jim's shoulders and crushed a jaunty hat against the clinking buttons of his coat. "I can't live in such suspense, and I want to know the truth. Five years is a weary time not to see you, and your letters lately have made me so unhappy. You can't be cross with me, because I am here at last; I have been just as careful as I could be not to do anything bothersome I thought you mightn't want me to speak to you among the people at the grand house where you are stopping, and so I gave the note to the pretty little girl with the long, fair curls, and told her it was for her papa, because I knew her papa would give it to you. But why must I be so careful—if you care—if I am to be——"

But at this juncture Jim had succeeded in regaining his breath and the ability to check her effusive incoherences.

"Madam," began O'Hare grimly, as he extricated himself from her affectionate embrace, "I am very sorry you are mistaken, and I am afraid my wife would object to all this."

With a shriek of consternation she sprang backward.

"I thought you were my Francisco—Francisco Borrello," she gasped. "I was hurrying after him just now, and I thought you were he, turning back to meet me."

And so it was Borrello in the ulster and slouched hat who had just passed! The detective was considering the advisability of questioning the perturbed young lady, when a man leaped between them, something gleamed and whizzed before Jim's eyes, and the next instant he tumbled headlong to the ground.

He made no attempt to rise, which he could not have done without placing himself at a disadvantage with his assailant. In starting backward from his whizzing knife Jim had stumbled and fallen so awkwardly that he had no chance whatever for his revolver at the moment.

"You forced me to do it, you fool," he heard the man mutter to the girl. "In a second more your tongue would have betrayed me; and you don't want me ruined, do you, Rose? So stop

your sniffling and come along; we mustn't be caught loitering in this quarter. I only hope I have made a finish of the accursed peeping Tom."

They went away together, and when they were beyond sight and hearing Jim arose to his feet.

The fellow had not "finished" O'Hare by any means. His blade had not so much as scratched Jim's skin.

It was Jim's collar button which had, in all probability, saved his life.

The knife had been swerved aside by the button, and had cut harmlesly downward into the thick breast-padding of his coat.

In the midst of his cogitations there was a tap at the door, and he looked up to behold the alleged lunatic himself.

"I was hardly prepared to see you again, sir," Jim said with more gratification than his words would seem to imply.

"I suppose not," he said, with the ghost of a smile flitting over his pallid face. "But I knew I should be traced, and I had forstalled the emergency."

"Yes?" said the detective encouragingly.

"It has been said that an insane man is cunning, but the desperate sane man can make an improvement upon that especial attribute," he returned.

"There is something in that," Jim admitted. "But how did you manage it?"

"Well, the medical autocrat of that private pen never sees any of the unfortunates confined within its walls; he trusts everything to his subordinates, he is also a specialist and eminent authority upon diseases of the brain. After my escape I went to him with a story—true enough, too, God knows!—of fearing my reason was giving way, and I requested his advice and treatment. I had previously obtained a generous loan from a banker whom I had signally befriended some years before; and told the specialist I would cheerfully treble his fee if he could conscientiously assure me that I was not threatened with the loss of my wits. The result was this—a written diagnosis of my ailment!"

He leaned over the study table and held toward Jim the article mentioned. O'Hara took the paper and waited for further explanations.

"That paper holds in his penmanship, over his own signature, the declaration of our asylum potentate that my brain is now, and has always been, as sound as his own," said the gentleman whose card was inscribed with the name of Steele Von Cheslie.

"And on the strength of that declaration the keeper released you?" said the detective.

"Well, I enforced the declaration with a certain quantity of chloroform I chanced to have convenient," he answered coolly; "then I left horse, wagon, and keeper by the roadside, and hastened back to you."

"My dear sir, you would have been more practical if you had pinned your faith on a lawyer instead of a detective," said O'Hara.

"And not half so wise," he responded quickly.

The result of the interview was that somewhere about noon they presented themselves before the local functionaries at Bramble Hollows.

After a few preliminaries a constable was dispatched to fetch the other claimant to the name of Steele Von Cheslie; and presently that gentlemen was ushered in.

"For what am I required?" he asked haughtily, as he carelessly toyed with a pendant of his watch guard.

The pendant was a thick crescent of richly chased gold, and in the arc was a tiny silver point—the point of the diamond star which had once formed a portion of the ornament!

"For what am I wanted?" he iterated, as no one had enlightened him on that point.

"You are wanted for several things. Francisco Borrello," said O'Hara, stepping forward and slipping a pair of handcuffs upon his wrists. "You are charged with imposture, and with the murder of Mrs. Cheslie; in your victim's grave you buried what is sufficient witness against you."

But Borrello was never tried before an earthly tribunal. He died in his cell shortly after his arrest, but not before he had made a full confession.

He had conceived a violent passion for the handsome young wife of his employer; and her abhorrence of him had fired his blood to fury.

After the tragedy he had taken the sleeping babe and fled. His resemblance to the real Mr. Cheslie and the implicit trust with which that gentleman had always favored him made easy the accomplishment of the imposture, whereby he deemed be could evade the penalty of his greater crime.

Cheslie himself had been inveigled into the private asylum, while he was indeed half mad with his anguish for the fate of his wife and child—whom, the cunning Borrello took good care to convince him, had mysteriously disappeared.

Borrello, however, had kept the child with him; she was valuable as a means to make his imposture the more successful and secure.

But the pretty, fair haired child has instinctively feared him, and had spurned his spurious endearments.

And quite as instinctively she seemed to understand she had gained a father whose care she had never known.

And as a pleasant sequel to the melancholy affair of the grave in the woods we will add that the girl Rosa—who was really an excellent and lovable young lady—happened to become eventually the wife of the reinstated master of Bramble Hollows.

The Meaning of Dreams

WOOD.—To dream you are cutting or chopping of wood shows that you will be happy in your family, and become rich and respectable in life. To dream you are carrying wood on your back shows that you will rise to affluence by your industry, but that your partner will be of a bad temper, and your children undutiful. If you dream you are walking in an extensive wood, it denotes that you will quickly fall in love, and also that you will be very likely often married.

WOOL.—To dream you are buying or selling of wool denotes prosperity and great affluence by means of industry and trade; to the lover, it is a favorable omen; your sweetheart is thereby shown to be of an amiable disposition, very constant and deeply in love with you. To dream of having wool on your head instead of hair betokens a severe fit of illness and unpleasant news from a far distant country.

WOUNDS.—To dream you are wounded is a very favorable omen, especially if it be with a sword; to the lover it denotes success in your amours and with an agreeable partner, who will be faithful and affectionate; to the tradesman, profit and increase of business; to the farmer, an increase in his cattle and plentiful crops; to the sailor, a profitable voyage, with unexpected success in love.

YARROW.—To dream of this weed, which is in general most abundant in church-yards, denotes to the married deaths in the family, and to the single that the grim tyrant will deprive them of the first object on whom they rest their affections.

YEW TREE.—An indication of the funeral of a very aged person, by whose death the dreamer will derive some benefit, or a protecting hand among the relations of the deceased person.

YEWBERRIES.—To a young man it shows a great disappointment in setting out in life, and to a young maiden it predicts dishonor if she gathers them, particularly if they stain any part of her clothes or hands.

ZEALANDER.—To dream you see an Indian in his native dress shows to a man he will travel, and to a woman she will wed a foreigner. To dream you see an Indian female predicts to a man that he will wed a rich widow, and to a woman, that she will have a son who will raise himself to great power and honor in the Indies. and bring wealth and honor to his kindred.

HOW TO READ CHARACTER

BY THE HAIR, EYES, FOREHEAD, EYEBROWS, NOSE, MOUTH AND CHIN

1. The gentleman whose hair is very black and smooth, hanging far over his shoulders, and in large quantity, is mild but resolute; cool, until greatly provoked; not much inclined to excess of any kind, but may be persuaded to it. He is constant in his attachment, and not liable to many misfortunes.

2. A lady of the same kind of hair is moderate in her desires of every kind, addicted to rejection, and though not subject to violence in love, is steady in her attachments, and no enemy to its pleasures; of a constitution neither vigorous nor yet feeble.

3. If the hair is very black, short, and curling, the gentleman will be given to liquor, somewhat quarrelsome, and of an unsettled temper, more amorous and less steady in his undertakings, but ardent at the beginning of an enterprise. He will be very desirious of riches, but will often be disappointed in his wishes therein.

4. The same may be said of a lady.

5. A gentleman with dark brown, long and smooth hair, is generally of a robust constitution, obstinate in his temper, eager in his pursuits, a lover of the fair sex, fond of variety, in his ordinary pursuits exceedingly curious, and of a flexible disposition. He will live long, unless guilty of early intemperance.

6. A lady of the same kind of hair will be nearly the same as the gentleman, but more steady in her conduct and attachments, especially in love. She will be of a good constitution, have many children, be much respected, enjoy good health, and a reasonable share of happiness.

7. If the hair is short and bushy, it will make very little alteration in the gentleman or lady, but that the gentleman will be more forward to strike when provoked, and the lady will be more of a scold.

8. A gentleman with light brown long smooth hair is of a peacable, even, and rather a generous temper; will prevent mischief, but when much provoked will strike furiously, but is afterwards sorry for his passion, and is soon appeased; strongly attached to the company of the ladies, and will protect them from any insult. Upon the whole, he is in general an amiable character, affable and kind.

(To be continued)

Current News

WHAT A MAN IS WORTH

The average man contains the constituents found in 1,200 eggs, has iron enough to make four tennenny nails, fat content to make seventy-five candles and a good sized piece of soap, not to speak of a bowl of sugar. Considering that eggs are selling for 95 cents a dozen, matches at 6 cents a box and candles for 5 cents each, says the Journal of the Minnesota Public Health Association, $582.84 is the actual worth of the constituents of a grown person, to say nothing of what the sugar he contains may be worth.

WHAT A FROG CAN DO

A frog weighing a pound can make his voice heard on a still night a distance of a mile. If a man weighing 150 pounds could do as well in proportion there would hardly be any need of telephones. He could converse in an ordinary tone with a person fifty miles away. Naturalists are not agreed as to why the bullfrog will sit on a log at night and send his bellow far around, but it is quite likely that he loves the sound of it himself. There is no other reason for the owl to hoot except to hear how it sounds. In the bayous and swamps of the South they have caught bullfrogs weighing five pounds, and their bellowing was like that of a steamer.

BASTING THREADS

"When I was a girl," said the lovely old lady, "we used to buy for basting a thread that was cheaper than the regular sewing thread and not quite so nice, but which was plenty good enough for basting. Then when we pulled out our basting threads we never threw them away, but rolled them up on spools and used them over again as long as we could.

"Maybe there are people still who practice that economy, but, so far as my knowledge extends, people today buy the best thread and use it for basting and then throw the basting thread away. And, do you know, I thing that in these later days we have become wasteful in many little ways? In my youthful days we never wasted anything."

PREHISTORIC WALL FOUND IN MISSOURI

In exploring a mound in Licking County recently there was uncovered a stone wall. It was three feet high and enclosed an area of sixteen feet square.

The wall was made of blocks of flint laid upon each other without cement of any kind, and was pretty well constructed.

This is, we believe, the second piece of prehistoric masonry discovered in this country.

In another mound was found a bit of paving—a number of flat stones having been laid to form a sort of floor or hearth.

This wall and the small area of stone pavement is all the masonry the mound builders or Indians ever did, so far as present discoveries indicate.

And this in a country where loose rocks were to be found in abundance, or where the labor of quarrying was slight. Indeed, flat rocks may be had in many regions on top of the earth without quarrying at all.

CRICKET GAMBLING

The Chinese are inveterate gamblers, and never lose an opportunity to bet, no matter how trivial the cause may be. One of their greatest institutions is cricket fighting, the crickets being caught, fed and trained as carefully as a blooded horse. There is a fixed diet for them, part of their food consisting of honey and boiled chestnuts. If they get sick they are fed with mosquitoes. Prior to fighting, their weight is ascertained and duly recorded, there being a fixed regulation as to their size and weight. On the door of the house in which the fight is to take place the record of each cricket is pasted up and the owner of the winner gets ten per cent. of all the bets. The cricket pit is a low tub placed on a table, and after weighing, the combatants are put in it and tickled with straws until they rush at each other with loud chirrups and fight until one of them is killed. Good fighting crickets are very valuable and are often sold for large sums.

ASTRONOMY AND BIRDS

Success has attended the application of astronomical methods to the solution of a mooted question in biology. This relates to the height of the flight of birds during their migrations at night. Two telescopes were placed at measured distances apart (from 10 to 21 feet), on an east and west line, and with them two observers simultaneously watched the moon.

The tracks of birds flying across the face of the moon were noted by each observer independently on a lunar chart, ready at his side. The tracks, being projected from separate points of observation, of course were not identical in position, and their distance apart furnished the basis for a calculation of the "parallax" of the flying birds. Two sets of observations in one case were made, in May and October. The deducted heights above the ground varied from 1,400 to 5,400 feet. The last, however, was an extreme case, most of the measures running from 1,500 to 2,500 or 3,000 feet.

A HOME-MADE BAROMETER

A barometer which will prophesy weather conditions a day in advance may be made from an ordinary incandescent bulb. Select a 60-watt lamp. One that has burned out will do, directs Popular Science Monthly. Hold it under water and file off the glass tip at the end of the bulb. The vacuum will cause the water to enter through the hole thus made, filling the bulb completely. The barometer should then be suspended wtih bulb-end downward.

When a drop of water appears suspended at the outlet, you may look for a storm to-morrow; when the drop disappears, fair weather is in store. There is a perfectly natural reason for this phenomenon. Stormy weather is always preceded by low barometric pressure. The atmospheric pressure, having decreased, the weight of the water inside the bulb tends to force water through the outlet. This force is small, but is sufficient to allow a drop of water to escape and hang suspended from the tip of the bulb. On the other hand, fair weather follows an area of high barometric pressure. The pressure of the atmosphere, under such conditions, will prevent the water from escaping and the suspended drop will be forced back into the bulb.

This simple barometer may be screwed into a wall or ceiling lighting fixture which is out of service.

HERE IS A BEAR WITH REAL INTELLIGENCE

How intelligent a bear may be is well illustrated by an account published by M. Baudouin in the Bulletin of the French Societe Nationale d'Acclimatation of a brown specimen that lives in the Jardin des Plautes, Paris.

This bear had noticed that whenever there was a heavy fall of rain the lower part of his den was flooded and the orifice by which the water flowed out was obstructed. Whenever this happened he profited by the occasion to take a good bath. This finished, he used to go to the outlet and scrape away the debris that had stopped it up, until the water flowed out and his home was dry. But once, in an exceptionally heavy flood, the water rose through the hole from the outside. This bear tried his usual method of getting rid of the water, but, finding this useless, sat down to think over the new situation.

Presently an idea came to him. A lot of rocks had been thrown into his den in an effort to raise the level of the floor and give him dry quarters. He studied these rocks attentively and then began carrying them one by one to the place where the water was entering. He tried with these stones to build a dam against the increasing water. After the water receded it was discovered that the bear had placed twenty rocks, weighing from twenty to forty pounds each.

FERTILITY OF SOCIAL CLASSES

Here are some facts about the fertility of various classes of society, presented recently to the British Statistic Society by Dr. T. H. C. Stevenson. While they are compiled for Great Britain, they would be generally true of America, though there would probably be some slight variation in the actual figures.

Agricultural laborers are 37 per cent. more fertile than textile workers, but the mortality among their children is 35 per cent. less.

Fertility increases as we go downward in the social scale, but this difference is of recent origin. In marriages contracted before 1861 there is comparatively little class variation in fertility. Since 1877 the birth rate has rapidly declined; it began in the higher social strata and spread gradually downward.

Mothers who work show a very low fertility. The least fertile are those who marry late in life. Generally speaking large families imply high mortality among the children, small families low mortality, but the comparatively low mortality rate of the less fertile classes does not begin to compensate for their low fertility.

MARVELOUS MEMORIES OF WELL-KNOWN MEN

One of the most remarkable "men of memory" is George Harbottle, a quarry miner living near Newcastle, England. This "son of the soil" possesses a memory which retains an indelible impression of every word which he hears or reads. After once reading a dozen pages of any book he can repeat them without omitting a single word. One morning this remarkable man purchased a volume of the "Fairie Queene," and before the evening he could recite Spencer's masterpiece from beginning to end.

Viscount Milner, a member of the War Cabinet, is the possessor of a wonderful memory. He once performed an astonishing feat while private secretary to Lord Goschen. He was asked to supply a copy of his chief's address to the electors of East Edinburgh, and failing to find the original, he wrote out the address from memory with such marvelous accuracy that on comparing it with the original it was found to contain only one trifling mistake.

Gladstone had a wonderful memory, and could "reel off" passages from Homer, Ovid and the "Iliad" at a moment's notice.

The greatest master of memory, however, was Lord Macaulay. From a very early age the retentiveness of his memory was extraordinary. When only three or four years of age his mind mechanically retained the form of what he read or heard. Once, as a child, when making an afternoon call with his father, he picked up Scott's "Lay of the Last Minstrel" for the first time, and quietly read it while his elders were engaged in conversation. When they returned home, Macaulay amazed his parents by reciting the whole of the poem without a mistake

FIGHTING A FISHERMAN'S PEST

Another attempt is being made to kill off the hair seals that live in such numbers on the flats at the mouth of the Fraser River. This great salmon stream has been the home of the seals since the memory of white men. The hair seal is a true seal with a black and white spotted coat of hair, but no underlying fur. He grows in size from a kitten as big as a spaniel puppy to an animal of perhaps 450 pounds in weight. His cousins of the Queen Charlotte and Vancouver Island reefs reach a ton in weight, but they do not get into the inland channels. The latter animals are known sometimes as sea lions.

The hair seals of the Fraser have been thorns in the flesh of the fishermen ever since salmon fishing became a recognized industry. They are strong, aggressive and quite intelligent. They have learned that fish collect in the nets of the fishermen and on the baited lines. They rob nets and lines, break them to pieces, and thus cause loss not only of fish but also of fishing tackle.

Various campaigns have been undertaken to clean up the colonies of these animals, but without success. They are hard to trap, seldom are found within reach of a gun, and avoid flats where men are liable to be seen. Yet they are always on hand. A hair seal will follow a man who is trolling, for hours, and frequently plucks the salmon from the hook after one has been caught. If one is shot the body turns on its back, the air comes from the lungs, the creature sinks like a stone. At one time the government tried the benefits of a bounty, but it did not bring results desired. The leather is marketable, when obtained, but there are few pelts brought in.

The government has now decided to try an experiment. Cross lines, operated by two employes of the department of marine and fisheries, will be strung over the shallows of the river mouth, where seals are most frequent. This will be the third government effort. The first was the bounty, the second was a measure brought on perhaps by wartime conditions. Explosives had played such havoc in fighting humans in Europe that their efficiency with regard to seals was considered. Two years ago a mudflat on the Fraser, where the seals sunned themselves in hundreds every day, was mined with high explosives, arranged to be exploded by pressure on a button. The mines were exploded. Hundreds of seals are said to have been killed, though few bodies were found. The experiment was expensive, and was not repeated, as no appreciable reduction in the hordes of amphibians was noted, and it was thought that the natural birthrate of the creatures would more than offset the harvest of dead animals by the mine method.

This third attempt is one which promises results in reduction of seals, and in saving the skins for market. The method is practically the old and illegal night-line. A strong line is strung across the current with short lateral lines hanging deep in the water. At the lower ends of the shorter lines are strong, sharp steal hooks. These catch the bodies of the seals as they swim through and hold them until they drown or until the men come and dispatch them. If it proves successful an extensive campaign will be undertaken in an effort to rid the broad flats and waters of the Fraser of the animals.—Scientific American.

LORE OF BLAZED TREES AN AID TO HISTORIANS

In earlier days, when large portions of the country were covered with forests and there were few roads, travel was often possible only by way of paths "blazed" through the woods. To blaze, as every woodsman knows, is to strike off a chip from the sides of trees, so that the line of marks shall indicate the direction of the trail.

In blazing for a path small trees were marked, but in blazing for the bounds of a lot or town or farm line larger trees were usually selected, the blaze being made about breast high. When, however, as was often the case, the blazing was done in winter on deep snow by men traveling on snowshoes, the mark was necessarily higher up. When such a line is traveled in the summer, especially after some years, during which the trees have grown, the marks are sometimes found high up on the trunks and are likely to escape the eye of the inexperienced. As many of them will also be partially overgrown the task of the surveyor who goes over one of these old lines is not always easy.

If the boundary line passes to the left of a tree selected for blazing the cut is made upon the right side. If the line goes to the right the tree is blazed upon the left side.

In running a boundary at a corner, where two lines come together, either a "monument" is erected—a stake supported by four boulders—or a tree is blazed on all four sides to indicate as nearly as possible the turning point of the line.

The permanency of the record made by blazing trees is quite remarkable. It is a matter of fact that in many cases of disputed lines or boundaries of lots in forest lands the courts have held the record of the blazes are sufficient and reliable, where carefully drawn plans and formally attested title deeds have been set aside. The wound of a blazed tree heals over, but never so completely that the scar may not be readily recognized by the experienced woodsman; hence it follows that so long as the blazed tree escapes fire and the axe of a lumberman so long it remains a faithful record of the line as surveyed.

Blazed trees also fix dates almost as accurately as they preserve boundaries. The outer shell which has grown over the scar is cut away and the rings in the wood beneath the bark testify to the number of years which have elapsed since the blaze was made.

EXPEDITION HUNTS BONES OF REPTILES OF PREHISTORIC AGE

Another expedition to look for the bones of great prehistoric reptiles in the Red River Valley of Alberta is on its way. This time it is under the direction of Dr. W. A. Parks, of the University of Toronto and the Royal Ontario Museum.

For a number of years these expeditions have been an annual summer journey for three months. Two years ago the almost perfect specimen of the kritosaurus incurvimanus, which has just been finally chipped free from the rock and presented to the museum, was found, making a distinct addition to the records of science and giving to Toronto the only specimen of the species yet discovered.

Three incomplete skeletons of the kritosaurau and a great horned head of a brontosaurus, 4 feet 6 inches in length, were found by the professor, but have not yet been carved from the rock. It is the hope of Professor Parks to collect ultimately for the Royal Ontario Museum one of the finest exhibits of dinosaurus in existence.

The locality and the method of finding the specimens are described by Professor Parks. "The river cuts right through the flat prairie to a depth of 400 feet, forming a whole lot of broken buttes, and it is among these that the bones are discovered. One of the difficulties in obtaining complete specimens is that the bones cannot be obtained until they are partly exposed by the action of natural deroding causes. Sometimes you are disappointed then, for after exploring you may find only a single bone. You dig down as close as you can and pack the rock in plaster-of-paris for shipment."

The Red River valley 3,000,000 years ago was near the coast of a great inland sea that stretched from the Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic Ocean. "The sand along the shallow, brackish shores of this great body of water formed a splendid preservative for those huge reptiles which inhabited the world at that time. Our kritosaurus was found in what we call the Bolly River formation of the Upper Cretacean system," explains Professor Parks.

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If the story told by a man named Don, who has been working three copper ore claims in the mills north of Guernsey, Wyo., proves to have any foundation in fact, this section promises to be rocked with a gold excitement which will duplicate that of fifty years ago, when hundreds poured in from the outside, led by the tale of ancient Spanish diggings.

Don recently appeared in Guernsey with specimens of ore that was later found to run $1,000 to the ton. His story was that while prospecting on one of his claims he ran across one of a number of holes left by unsuccessful prospectors of years ago. In the hope of finding a copper "stain" he proceeded to clear away the rubbish. He was surprised to find that he had uncovered a drift tunnel. Inside he found the bones of three men and a vein of schist eighteen inches in thickness, in which, he says, he secured his samples of gold. His story is being investigated.

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